A ny list of significant changes af-
fecting higher education over the
last generation would note two
key developments: the growth of
computer literacy and the emerg-
ce of information technolog-
(1T) for everything that occurs on cam-
pus and the increasing indispensability
of support from the federal government.
In-
deed, it is impossible to imagine the modern
U.S. college or university without either of
these critical elements. Traditionally, how-
et and federal policy have occupied
two very different worlds, and the people
who inhabit one rarely interact with those
from the other. Although not mutually ex-
clusive, the two worlds represent different
cultures that deal with different issues, em-
phasizeinformation and expertise, attract
different people generally speaking different lan-
guages, have different forms of expertise,
and honor different accomplishments.
This separation is changing today as
the events of 9/11 changed everything. Be-
cause of the September 11 tragedy in the United
States and the increasing indispensability of
public policy to higher education over the
camden years, both federal and higher
education institutions are working together
to keep track of student visa recipients who
have entered the country. For the first time,
student visas are being recorded on the web,
creating a system, for schools to obtain soft-
ware that will allow them to manage batch records
with campus systems. This is the most important
change in higher education in recent years.

Beyond 9/11

The September 11 tragedy in the United
States changed everything. Because of
the federal government’s response to the
September 11 tragedy in the United States
and American citizens receive student visas to come to the
United States each year. They add diversity
to the campus, bring knowledge and skills
that enrich research and teaching activities, and
lend a personal appreciation for democracy, market economies, the
United States, and American citizens. While here, they spend
more than $1 billion a year buying goods and services, making higher educa-
tion the fifth-largest service-sector export
in the country. For good reason, interna-
tional students have long been regarded as
a clearly and unambiguously good thing.

But the events of 9/11 raised questions
about the U.S. visa policies. The public
learned that several of the hijackers
had entered the United States on student
visas and had obtained training at U.S.
high schools—training that they used
with horrifying efficiency. More revela-
tions followed, including that the federal
government did not know much about
international students after they received
their visas, including whether or not they
actually enrolled in a college or university
after entering the country. Moreover, a
database mandate by the federal govern-
ment in 1996 to improve its ability to
monitor international students was years
behind schedule and way over budget.

In fact, the nation’s mechanisms for
keeping track of international students was
horribly outdated. Since the 1990s, colla-
ges and universities have been required
to keep track of student visa recipients who
enroll at their campuses. The requirements
are straightfor-
thright. Schools maintain in-
formation on all international students, in-
cluding the student’s name, address, visa
number, major, degree studies begun, and
date of completion. Whenever a student
does anything that might change his
or her visa status—for example, move,
marry apply for a job, change majors, or
leave school—the information is reported
to the federal government.

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