



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

June 26, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
The State Department
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) is concerned about the administration's processing of visa applications for international students and scholars. International scientific exchange is the most vital component in advancing knowledge gleaned from the archaeological record. A robust conversation about archaeological practices and discoveries directly benefits our country. The SAA's annual meeting, which draws about 4,000 archaeologists, contributes to the hospitality and tourism industry, while our participation in scholarly endeavors is part of the journal publishing economy. These sectors of the economy provide middle class jobs for the workforce. Not least, U.S. citizens oversee a rich, fragile, and irreplaceable set of archaeological sites and collections that contribute to the story of America's unique history. Ongoing documentation, stewardship, and interpretation of what has happened on American soil has no geographic boundaries and international collaboration is essential to this enterprise.

The SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With 7,000 members, the SAA represents professional and avocational archaeologists, archaeology students in colleges and universities, and archaeologists working at tribal agencies, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. The SAA has members throughout the United States, as well as in many nations around the world.

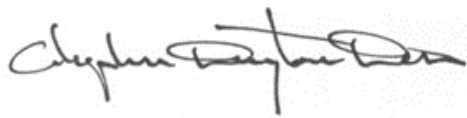
The SAA understands the significant challenge that illegal immigration presents to the nation. We also agree that this matter raises serious national security concerns, and that better enforcement of expired visas is something that is needed and should take place. However, these legitimate concerns need to be separated from the vital interest in a transparent and predictable visa application process that supports collaborations with international scholars in the field of archaeology.

The administration's frequent and sometimes contradictory policy decisions when it comes to visas for visiting students and scholars have resulted in a climate of uncertainty. Many archaeologists who tried to enter the United States to attend our annual meeting in April, for example, were given conflicting instructions by the US consulates in their home nations. Some decided not to spend their hard-earned dollars on travel to the U.S. at all, deterred by the uncertainty. Other foreign archaeologists already present in the United States are concerned that their visas will not be renewed.

The free exchange of research is the bedrock of science, not just archaeology. Without the dissemination of ideas, scientific progress is stunted, which means that human development and progress are stunted as well. International mobility is also essential for the training of young scientists, and this is particularly true in archaeology. We learn from other nations' lessons in developing archaeological research preservation infrastructure and they learn from our advances. Future archaeologists from all over the globe train and develop their expertise in the United States, then return to their home nations to contribute to archaeology schools and programs, to build museums, and to protect their irreplaceable heritage. This in turn benefits the nations themselves, the United States, and the rest of the world.

The SAA is fully in support of a secure, efficient, and effective visa system that is transparent to users, applicants, and hosting institutions alike. That system must also facilitate the free and open exchange of ideas and dialogue upon which international scientific growth and development depend. Science and security are not mutually exclusive propositions. We urge the administration to publish standards for visas and then reliably and consistently act upon those public standards. This specificity will quell fears among researchers from other countries. Failure to do so will do irreparable harm to scientific progress here and abroad as well as to US competitiveness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Christopher D. Dore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "C".

Christopher D. Dore
President of the Society for American Archaeology