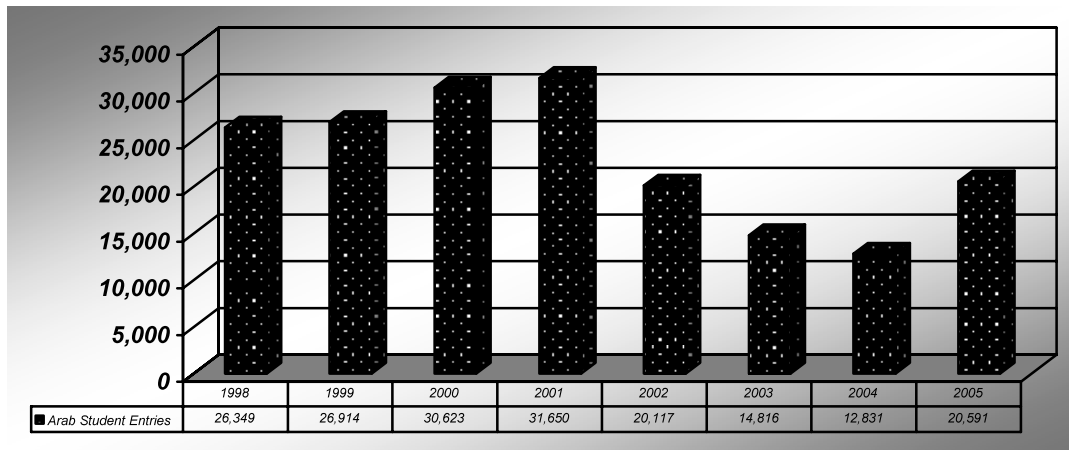


## 5.0 Cutting America’s Link to Tomorrow’s Leaders

Arab student admissions into the US are still vastly below pre-9/11 levels, although F-1 (student) entries were on the upswing in 2005, according to Department of Homeland Security statistics. Quantitative analysis of admissions in 2005 seems to indicate that students from the Arab market are entering the US higher education system in higher numbers.

### Arab Student Admissions into the United States<sup>14</sup>

(Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security*)



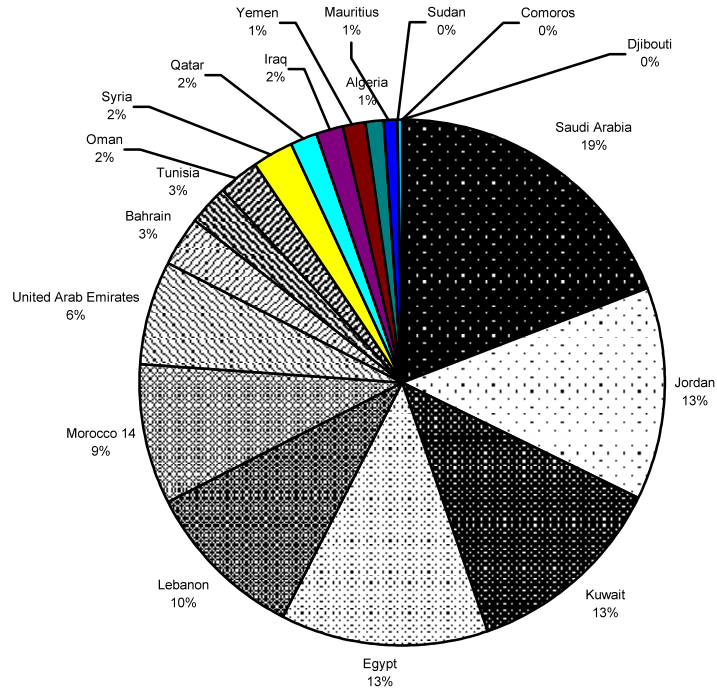
However, admission analysis alone leads to the wrong conclusions about enrollment levels in the 2004-2005 academic year. Greater numbers of student entries and exits in the year 2005 reflect the inefficiency of requiring students from key markets to return to their home countries (or a third country such as Mexico or Canada) to reapply for expiring education visas. This is because education visa (F-1) durations have been reduced for applicants originating in the Arab market. Citizens of 11 countries (accounting for 43% of Arab foreign students enrolled in 2001) no longer receive visas of sufficient duration to complete a four-year degree in the United States with normal entries and exits for home country visits.

<sup>14</sup> Includes multiple entries

## Visa Denied

### 2005 Arab Student (F-1) Admissions into the United States <sup>15</sup>

(Source: Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security)



Students from markets undergoing rapid change and economic development, such as Libya, cannot obtain visas valid for more than one year. **In July of 2006, there was a backlog of 7,500 Saudi students waiting for visas to study in the US, according to the Saudi Ambassador to the United States.** <sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Can include multiple entries by the same student.

<sup>16</sup> The Value of a Visa? Priceless <http://www.saudi-us-relations.org/articles/2006/interviews/060712-qunaibet-interview.html>

## Visa Denied

### Arab Student F-1 (Education) Visa Validity Periods

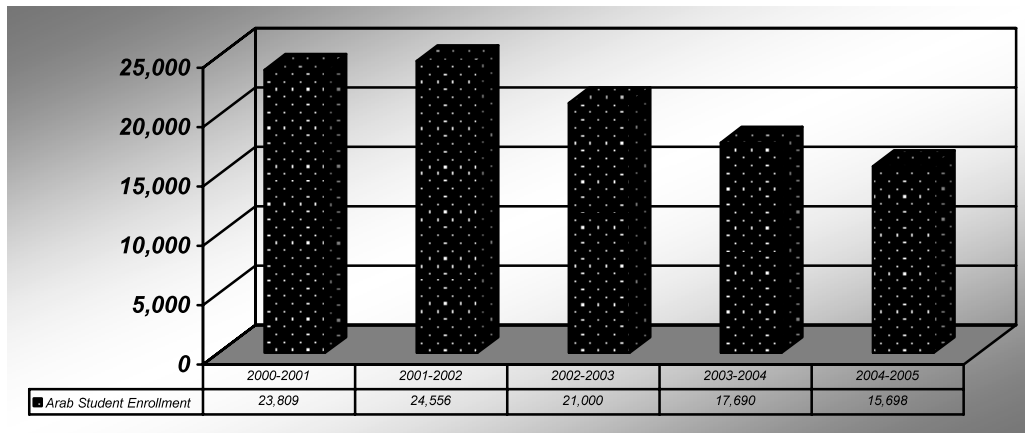
(Source: US State Department, August 2006)

Country	F-1 Visa Validity Period (Months)
Qatar, Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan, Oman, Morocco, Bahrain, Tunisia, Egypt, Mauritania	60
United Arab Emirates	48
Palestine	36
Saudi Arabia, Syria	24
Yemen, Libya, Djibouti, Comoros, Algeria	12
Sudan	6
Somalia, Iraq	3

Some students who were enrolled in the US higher education system in 2001 returned to their home countries only to find themselves barred from reentry into the US. The degree of visa duration and reentry uncertainty has a direct effect on enrollment, as does the declining issuance rate of education visas. According to Institute for International Education (IIE) enrollment figures published in the annual “Open Doors” reports, the door has been slammed shut on Arab market students. 2004-2005 Arab enrollments declined 36% from the 2001-2002 level.

### Arab Student Enrollment in US Higher Education by Academic Year

(Source: Institute for International Education)



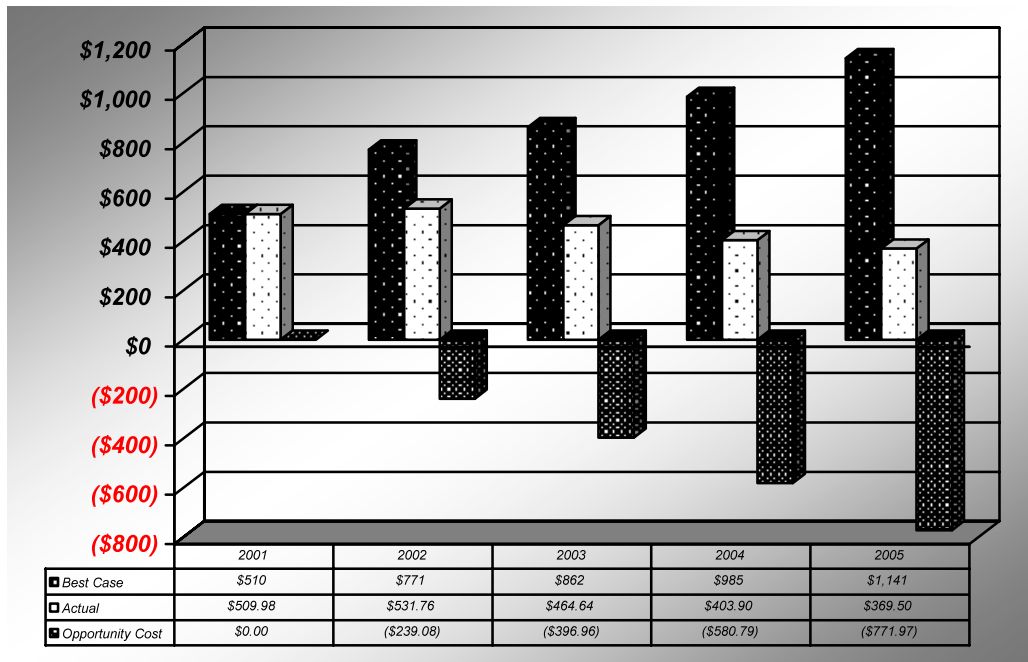
The economic and cultural impact of this decline in Arab student enrollment can only harm US interests in the long term. Currently, classrooms have many fewer Arab students offering their perspectives and contributing valuable research in US colleges and universities. Future generations of US business and government leaders will encounter fewer counterparts who understand or value the American system and the English language. Less important, though material, are the short-term economic impacts and losses for the higher education service industry.

## Visa Denied

International students brought \$13.3 billion to the U.S. economy in money spent on tuition, living expenses, and related costs, according to the NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Using NAFSA's benchmark revenue per student, Arab students generated approximately \$370 million dollars for the United States economy in the 2004-2005 academic year. Using publicly available benchmark input/out tables for revenues to employee headcount in the higher education industry, this number of foreign students supports approximately 4,296 direct higher education jobs.

### Estimated US Revenues Generated by Arab Students, Best Case Scenario, Opportunity Cost (\$ US Million)

(Source: Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, Inc.)



In a best-case scenario where the US attempted to maintain this vital bridge to the Arab world, trend line enrollment could have reached 49,000 students from the region in 2005. The opportunity lost to the US higher education system is relevant: \$1.989 billion and almost 9,000 additional higher education jobs.

*Recommendation #6: The US must reverse Arab student declines through a two-part strategy. It must apply sufficient additional visa processing resources to accelerate the admission of qualified, credentialed students from the region and reduce applicant backlogs. The US must also bring in larger numbers of Arab students through diversified scholarship grant distribution. Grants should seek to increase the number of students from countries that have historically sent few students to the US.*

### ***Fixing the Fulbright***

The Fulbright Program is the preeminent US program for bringing foreign students into the US to study. The program began in the aftermath of World War II, when Senator J. William Fulbright led his peers in Congress and President Harry Truman in the search for ways to reduce international misunderstandings and global conflict. Fulbright correctly argued that exchanges of students, especially individuals likely to play future leadership roles in their country, would have a material impact on cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and economic development. This vision led to the creation of a comprehensive program administered by the US State Department that was charged with building and rebuilding cultural bridges between nations.

A review of the year 2005 and historical Fulbright grants to foreign nationals in the Arab world reveals little State Department awareness of the need to build or rebuild bridges damaged by long-term neglect, 9/11, and tensions over US policies in the region. Scholarship grants to the future leaders of the US's largest regional import partner and key energy exporter, the UAE, were exactly zero in the 2004-2005 academic year. Saudi Arabia is in 14<sup>th</sup> place among the Arab League in terms of Fulbright grants from 1949-2004.

## Visa Denied

### Fulbright Grants to Foreign Nationals

(Source: *J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board Annual Report 2005*)

Fulbright Grants	1949-2004	2005	Average Yearly
Egypt	1500	35	27
Morocco	913	36	17
Jordan	562	26	10
Palestine	527	25	10
Tunisia	424	40	8
Yemen	379	17	7
Syria	334	13	6
Lebanon	303	11	6
Sudan	235	0	4
Iraq	232	40	4
Oman	194	8	4
Algeria	188	8	3
Somalia	139	0	3
Saudi Arabia	87	14	2
Bahrain	57	13	1
Mauritania	27	0	0
United Arab Emirates	24	0	0
Djibouti	12	0	0
Libya	11	0	0
Qatar	11	1	0
Kuwait	9	3	0

While most year 2005 country grants are above historical annual levels, they do not reflect the “rebuilding bridges” objective that lies at the core of the Fulbright program’s mission.

The government of Saudi Arabia has sought to rebuild bridges through a new program offering 15,000 scholarships for students to study in the US. 10,229 Saudi students registered for the 2006-2007 academic year will receive scholarships of up to \$30,000 per year. US government officials are now working to ensure that all 15,000 students have visas to enter by January 2007.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> New program sends 15,000 Saudis to U.S. colleges, Chicago Sun - Times. Sep 10, 2006. p. A27

Visa Denied

*Recommendation #7: The US State Department and Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board should double the number of Arab scholarship grants and reprioritize their distribution toward countries whose trade potential and regional influence has not historically been reflected in Fulbright allotments. Grant distribution criteria should aim to attract worthy scholars from historically underrepresented countries like the UAE and Libya where no foreign student recovery program (like Saudi Arabia's) currently exists.*

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