
Latitudes: What keeps directors of English-language programs up at night? Visa denials.

1 message

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Latitudes

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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English programs call visa denials a pressing problem

Student-visa denials continue to disrupt English-language programs'

international recruitment, with two-thirds calling refusals one of their most-pressing problems.

Visa denials were one of only two issues, along with low enrollments, named by more than half of respondents to a [survey](#) released on Tuesday by EnglishUSA, a membership group of English-language programs.

About a third said they were having difficulty hiring or retaining qualified instructors and other staff members. Three in 10 said visa-processing times were a big headache.

The survey findings suggest that although the impact of Covid is — finally — receding for English programs, challenges remain. Half of respondents to a [similar survey](#) last year said the lingering impact of the pandemic was still a major concern.

Visa denials are in no way a problem unique to English programs. In 2023, 36 percent of applications for F-1, or student, visas were [rejected](#), according to the U.S. Department of State. That was a record high — and a far higher refusal rate than for other nonimmigrant visas.

But students coming to the United States for English-language study may face hurdles because American consular officials may be unfamiliar with their programs or question whether they are legitimate students.

Survey respondents said they believed that there were “systemic misunderstandings and biases surrounding attending an [English-language program] as a valid reason for obtaining an F-1 visa.” In a report on the findings, EnglishUSA called for a campaign to raise awareness that English programs are a “legitimate pathway to higher education and cultural immersion” in the United States.

Respondents also said there should be greater government transparency about denial rates and reasons for refusals, as well as more efficient visa processing.

More than 365 programs, or about 45 percent of those in the United States, took part in the survey, which was conducted by Bonard Education, a company that does international-enrollment research and strategic planning for colleges. Respondents included both college-based programs and those operated by private providers.

English-language enrollments continue to grow but at a sluggish pace, about 4 percent in the past year. Japan remains the top-sending country, and more than a third of students learning English are from Asia. Their spending had a \$1.2-billion impact on the American economy.

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The advertisement features a light blue background with a pattern of small icons related to education and technology. The main title is in large, bold, blue letters. Below the title, there is a subtitle in a smaller, italicized font. The bottom half of the advertisement is an illustration showing a series of steps leading up to a graduation cap. On the steps, there are icons of a laptop, a stack of books, a lightbulb, and a smartphone. Small human figures are shown interacting with these icons, symbolizing the program's focus on professional development and leadership for librarians.

The Chronicle is partnering with Ithaka S+R to host a brand new **professional development program for librarians** in July. This innovative two-week program will help library leaders understand the

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China Initiative conviction is overturned

A federal appeals court has thrown out the conviction of a Kansas professor who was tried as part of the China Initiative, the Trump-administration investigation of academic and economic espionage.

The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last week [ordered](#) a lower court to strike the conviction of Feng (Franklin) Tao on charges of making a materially false statement, ruling that prosecutors failed to show that the former University of Kansas professor affected any federal research grant decisions by not disclosing travel to China to set up a lab. The decision voids the last conviction against Tao after a judge earlier [acquitted](#) him on three other more serious charges.

The reversal deals another blow to the China Initiative's already-shaky [track record](#). Still, scholars worry that the investigation, which was shut down by the Biden administration in February 2022, could have a long-term chilling effect on scientists, particularly those of Chinese descent.

In the U.S. House, Republican lawmakers have pushed legislation to [revive](#) the government probe into Chinese influence on American campuses.

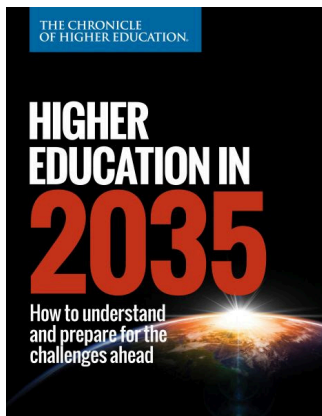
Also in research-security news:

- The University of Maryland at College Park will pay \$500,000 to settle allegations that it did not disclose foreign funds received by three researchers on federal grant proposals. The settlement, [announced](#) by

the U.S. Department of Justice, does not determine the university's liability.

- The White House released [long-awaited guidance](#) setting minimum standards for how research universities must handle issues such as cybersecurity, foreign-travel reporting, and other research-security risks. Federal science agencies will now have six months to craft their individual policies.
- A [bill](#) introduced by Sen. Marco Rubio, a Republican of Florida, seeks to stop taxpayer-funded research from being shared with or benefiting entities with ties to the Chinese military and national security.
- Science ministers from the G7, a group of some of the world's biggest economies, [pledged](#) at a recent meeting to cooperate on research security, strengthening scientific infrastructure, and improving engagement with Africa.

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Endowment tax plan could penalize international recruitment

A proposal to increase taxes on large college endowments could discourage elite institutions from enrolling international students.

The [measure](#), which was approved by a key House committee, would exclude international and undocumented students from head counts colleges use to determine if they are required to pay federal tax on their endowments. Private colleges must pay the tax if they enroll at least 500 students and have assets of \$500,000 per student or more. Removing foreign students from head counts would expand the number of colleges subject to the endowment tax and increase the taxes that institutions pay.

Rep. Jason Smith, a Missouri Republican who is chairman of the House Ways and Means committee, said the bill would help combat campus antisemitism, which he [blamed](#), in part, on “dark foreign influences and some international students [who] have helped fuel” pro-Palestinian protests. Other public officials have suggested that students from overseas are agitators behind campus demonstrations and called for them to be [deported](#).

In a [letter](#) to lawmakers, the American Council on Education called the proposal “misguided” and said it could punish colleges for recruiting foreign students.

Around the globe

The State Department has issued [guidance](#) that would make it easier for undocumented students who graduate from American colleges to get work

authorization. The Biden administration [announced](#) the policy change last month.

The College Board has canceled a larger-than-usual number of Advanced Placement exam scores after an [international cheating ring](#) leaked copies of the test.

Five people have been killed and hundreds injured in student protests in [Bangladesh](#) over quotas for government jobs.

American intelligence officials said Iran has sought to [covertly stoke](#) campus anti-Israel protests.

Hebrew University, in Israel, has started an [English-language undergraduate program](#) to attract Jewish students who see American campuses as unwelcoming.

A prominent Russian university unexpectedly shut down its [political-science department](#).

Nearly one in five Ukrainian scientists have left the country since the [war with Russia](#) began.

Olena Zelenska, the first lady of Ukraine, urged more international scientific collaboration and exchange in a [speech](#) at the National Academy of Sciences.

Germany's education minister, Bettina Stark-Watzinger, is being urged to [resign](#) after her agency explored whether to discipline academics who supported protests against Israel.

More than 100 people, including college students, were [kidnapped](#) for ransom in Ethiopia.

International students contributed more than [\\$37 billion Canadian](#) to that country's economy.

Prairie View A&M University, a historically Black college in Texas, was recognized for its [global education work](#) by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

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And finally ...

They are often as big as the children who wear them and can weigh close to nine pounds, yet most elementary-school students in Japan carry *randoseru*, bulky leather backpacks. No one mandates the school bags, but their ubiquity reflects an adherence to cultural norms in Japanese society.

Thanks for reading. I always welcome your feedback and ideas for future reporting, so drop me a line at karin.fischer@chronicle.com. You can also connect with me on [X](#) or [LinkedIn](#). If you like this newsletter, please share it with colleagues and friends. They can [sign up here](#).

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