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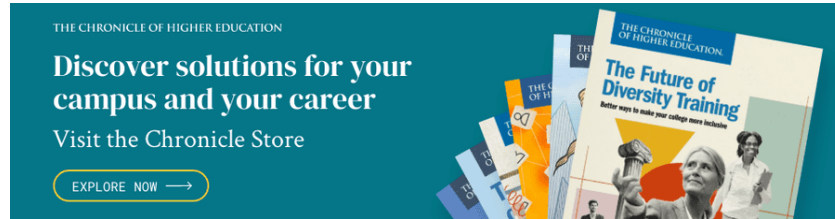
## Latitudes: In Hungary, U.S. conservatives see an unlikely model for higher-ed reform

1 message

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# Latitudes

THE CHRONICLE  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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## Why Hungary?

Why does a small Central European country with fewer than 70 colleges loom so large in right-wing visions of remaking American higher education?

From conservative activist Christopher F. Rufo to Vice President JD Vance, many in the orbit of the new Trump administration look to Hungary as a potential model for reform. “The closest that conservatives have ever gotten to successfully dealing with left-wing domination of universities is Viktor Orbán’s approach in Hungary,” Vance said of the country’s populist prime minister in an interview last year.

For *The Chronicle*, I took a look at [why conservatives are so hyped up about Hungary](#). Here are a few takeaways:

**Orbán has succeeded in casting higher education as a dangerous foe in his largely successful prosecution of the culture wars.** Like Trump, Orbán inveighs against educated elites and political correctness. Trump’s rhetoric “could be out of the mouth

Gmail - Latitudes: In Hungary, U.S. conservatives see an unlikely model for higher-ed reform of Orbán,” said Eve Darian-Smith, chair of global and international studies at the University of California at Irvine.

**He sought to “stamp out wokeness” by forcing the closure of gender and women’s studies departments at Hungarian universities.** In the United States, Orbán’s campaign has echoes in efforts to end diversity, equity, and inclusion policies and programming.

**Through “a seemingly slow and gentle transformation,” the Hungarian government “undercut the autonomy of universities.”** Rather than a frontal assault, Orbán used what appeared to be benign governance changes to exert greater control over public institutions.

There’s an American state that already “looks a lot like what happened in Hungary,” said Brendan Cantwell, a professor of higher, adult, and lifelong education at Michigan State University. It’s Florida, where Rufo and a slate of trustees appointed by the state’s Republican governor fired [New College’s](#) president, dismantled gender studies, and sought to change the college’s curriculum and mission.

**Orbán used different levers to exert influence on both public and private colleges.** Orbán used foreign-accreditation legislation to put pressure on [Central European University](#), a liberal-arts institution founded by the financier George Soros to help rebuild academic life after the fall of Communism. Its leaders eventually relocated the college to Austria.

Similarly, the Trump administration could tax endowments, impound scientific grants if it was displeased by the area of research, use the Department of Justice and other federal agencies to investigate colleges, and threaten student-aid funding to compel institutions to adopt certain policies.

As to whether Hungary’s playbook can be replicated in the United States, stay tuned.

And look to *Latitudes* for coverage of the new administration and its impact on international education. If there are issues I should be following, send me a note at [karin.fischer@chronicle.com](mailto:karin.fischer@chronicle.com).

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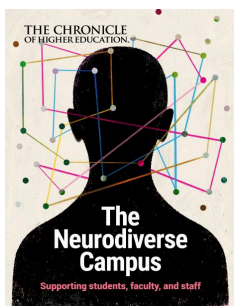
## Appeals court rules against DACA

A federal appeals court has [ruled](#) the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program unlawful, the latest blow to the federal program that provides legal protections to young immigrants.

The judges upheld a lower-court decision that found that the program, known as DACA, violates U.S. immigration law, despite efforts by the Biden administration to shore it up through [regulatory changes](#). But they confined the impact of the decision to Texas, the state that had spearheaded the case, allowing current beneficiaries to continue in the program elsewhere.

More than half a million immigrants brought to the United States illegally as children are enrolled in the program. With President Trump's [return to the White House](#), DACA's future is uncertain: While the Biden administration has defended the program, the Trump administration tried to terminate it in its first term. The Supreme Court [rejected](#) on technical grounds the earlier attempt to end the program.

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## The Neurodiverse Campus

Each year tens of thousands of students with diagnoses of neurodivergence graduate from high school. Yet many neurodivergent students remain invisible or undersupported on college campuses. [Order this report](#) to learn how colleges can strengthen their support for neurodivergent students, faculty, and staff.

## How a bill to deport criminals could affect international students

Legislation to make it easier to deport immigrants accused of minor crimes could also affect international students and scholars by giving state officials authority to sue to stop the issuance of visas from certain countries.

The bill, which [passed](#) the U.S. Senate on Monday, would mandate the detention and potential deportation of undocumented immigrants accused of crimes like burglary and shoplifting. The Laken Riley Act is named for a Georgia college student killed by an immigrant on parole for shoplifting.

But a provision of the bill would allow states to sue the federal government and seek broad bans on visas from countries that won't take back deportees, which could affect student and scholar applicants. China and India, the two largest sources of international students in the United States, are both included on a [list](#) of "recalcitrant" or uncooperative countries.

The measure, which has attracted bipartisan support, must now go to the U.S. House for a second vote before being sent to President Trump.

## A proposed "15-percent rule" for OPT

Amid [mixed messages](#) from President Trump about attracting and retaining overseas talent, one Rutgers University professor has a proposal for reining

Gmail - Latitudes: In Hungary, U.S. conservatives see an unlikely model for higher-ed reform in growth in optional practical training and limiting “segregated” degree programs that cater to large numbers of foreign students.

Hal Salzman, a professor of planning and public policy, suggested allowing only the top 15 percent of students in a graduating class to participate in OPT, the work program for international graduates of American colleges.

Salzman, who studies science and engineering labor markets, noted that 68 percent of international master’s students in computer science are enrolled in programs where at least half of the graduates are on student visas. Almost half are in programs where more than 75 percent are from abroad, Salzman said.

Such programs have [grown](#) because they benefit both colleges and students seeking to work in the United States, Salzman said. “They’re a high-profit center for the universities, and it’s the price of entry for the labor market.” A 15-percent rule would discourage international students from attending these programs because of the competition for OPT slots.

Critics of [OPT](#) call it a backdoor for people looking to work, rather than study, in the United States and say it squeezes out American students and workers. Advocates argue that it is key to attracting students who consider work experience an important part of their degree and that international graduates make up for lagging domestic interest in STEM fields.

You can hear Salzman’s remarks as part of [discussion of legal immigration](#) hosted by the Center for Immigration Studies, a group that favors more restrictive immigration policy.

## Around the globe

**The American Historical Association’s governing board vetoed a [resolution](#)** condemning Israel’s deadly attacks on Gaza, an issue that sparked fierce debate among the group’s members.

**Nearly 50,000 international students received** visas but never enrolled at the Canadian colleges that sponsored them, according to an investigation by [The Globe and Mail](#).

**The British government will** introduce legislation to [protect free speech](#) on college campuses.

**European universities could** relax some prohibitions on [academic research with military applications](#), prompted by Russia’s invasion of

Ukraine.

**Student expulsions and faculty dismissals have** picked up at [Russian universities](#) since the war.

**India has created** a [special visa](#) for international researchers, scientists, and scholars to help attract academics for joint projects, training programs, and post-doctoral fellowships.

**India's government will** set up [career-counseling centers](#) at all major universities.

**China wants to encourage** [more academic and research collaboration](#) with overseas universities that are highly ranked in science and technology.

**The leader of the opposition party in Australia has** promised to [cap international enrollments](#) if his party wins an upcoming federal election.

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

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