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Latitudes: What Trump's first week means for international ed

1 message

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Latitudes

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Executive orders and a federal-funding freeze spark concern

Eight years ago, President Donald J. Trump imposed a travel ban right out of the gate, halting admission to the United States from a half-dozen largely Muslim countries and throwing thousands of foreign students and scholars into a state of uncertainty.

In his second term, Trump has taken a different approach, issuing an [executive order](#) to reinstate [heightened vetting](#) of travelers and giving federal agencies 60 days to identify countries that pose such a significant security risk that their citizens should be barred from American soil. Call it travel ban-lite.

The presidential order is part of a flurry of activity in the first days of the new administration that could affect international education, including a [pause](#), announced late Monday, on trillions of dollars of federal spending. Funding for U.S. State Department educational programs, including the flagship Fulbright exchange program, will be

affected by the freeze, according to a spreadsheet sent to federal agencies and shared with *The Chronicle*.

Jill Allen Murray, deputy executive director of public policy for NAFSA: Association of International Educators, said the group is “paying attention to and concerned about the potential implications” of the executive order. It directs the secretaries of state and homeland security, the attorney general, and the director of national intelligence to submit a joint report identifying countries “for which vetting and screening information is so deficient as to warrant a partial or full suspension on the admission of nationals from those countries.”

It's unclear what countries might be included on such a list and whether prohibitions would apply to students, scholars, and researchers. During the first Trump administration, a final version of the travel ban, approved by the U.S. Supreme Court, [carved out](#) an exemption for students from Iran.

Another provision of the executive order has raised alarms: It asked federal officials to recommend “any actions necessary” to protect Americans from visa holders who have undermined freedom of speech, called for sectarian violence, or provided “aid, advocacy, or support for foreign terrorists.” There are concerns that order could be used to revoke the visas of international students who take part in pro-Palestinian protests.

Both President Trump and the new secretary of state, Marco Rubio, have called for [deporting](#) international students who express support for Palestinians or criticize the Israeli government's military response in Gaza.

During his recent confirmation hearing, Rubio, a former Florida senator, said he would be “[very forceful](#)” on the issue of revoking visas of Hamas supporters or denying them entry to the United States in the first place.

Murray said it was premature to determine the impact of the executive order and other early policy announcements on colleges and their international students since many of the officials who will be responsible for enacting them aren't yet on the job.

NAFSA has set up a [webpage](#) to track executive and regulatory actions by the new administration, which Murray said is updated multiple times a day. The group is also holding webinars on policy issues.

Meanwhile, several states filed suits to stop the sudden pause on federal funding, which had been set to take effect Tuesday evening. (A federal judge blocked it from taking effect.) The administration has

said the freeze was needed in order to conduct an across-the-board ideological review of loans, grants, and other government spending.

In an email, Mark Overmann, executive director of the Alliance for International Exchange, confirmed that the freeze would apply to programs run by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs such as the Gilman International Scholarship program, which expands study-abroad opportunities for low-income and first-generation American students, and EducationUSA, a global network of centers that advise international students about studying at American colleges.

The status of spending on some international work has already been in question because of an earlier pause, announced last week, on foreign aid. Some researchers told *The Chronicle* that they had been instructed to stop work on overseas projects.

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What to do if ICE comes to campus

Protocols for responding to federal authorities need to be broadly understood by faculty, staff, and students following the Trump administration's announcement that campuses are no longer protected from immigration enforcement.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said it was [rescinding a 2011 policy](#) — and upending even-longer-standing practice — that restricted Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents from making immigrant arrests at sensitive locations such as churches, hospitals, and schools and colleges.

Limits remain on authorities' reach — student records are protected by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, unless there is a court order or subpoena to release them to law-enforcement officers. And some question whether the Trump administration would have the resources to carry out widespread raids on campuses or would want the public-relations headache.

Still, experts said that colleges should [raise awareness](#) of campus guidance for dealing with ICE agents, and not just among employees, like campus police, who regularly deal with law enforcement. Professors and administrative staff members should know specific contacts in the general-counsel or public-safety office to immediately reach out to if they are approached by agents.

They should “know what to do and who to call,” said Dan H. Berger, who leads the academic and medical-immigration team at the law firm Green and Spiegel. Many colleges already have such plans.

There are other [steps](#) that colleges can take in the wake of the Trump administration's announcement:

Colleges can rethink what parts of campus should be publicly accessible. Most colleges allow community members to freely come on campus. While areas open to the public, like parking lots and student centers, can be subject to immigration enforcement, colleges can designate more parts of campus as private, making libraries and academic buildings accessible only by key cards. Agents need judicial warrants to get into private areas.

People on campus should be encouraged to carry identifying documents. International students, professors on work visas, and students covered by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which gives legal protections to some young undocumented immigrants, might not typically take their immigration or visa paperwork to the classroom or the gym. But they should, said Berger, who helped write an [American Council on Education guide](#) for colleges on immigration issues in the new administration.

Legal clinics can be resources for concerned students. A project run by Cornell University [counsels](#) DACA recipients to identify potential paths to a skilled-work visa or other status. Students can also do a preemptive consultation with a lawyer so they are not starting from square one if they are detained by immigration officers.

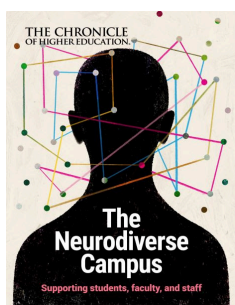
Colleges, however, should not obstruct immigration enforcement such as “encouraging students to go out the back door when ICE is at the front door,” Berger said.

And while colleges should take the new policy directive seriously, Allan Wernick, senior legal adviser to Citizenship Now, a legal-aid clinic run by the City University of New York, said he was concerned it could ratchet up apprehension on campus, leading people to “panic based on rumors and hearsay.”

Wernick, who was the group’s longtime director, said he did not expect immigration raids on schools and colleges to become commonplace because of the resources involved and the steps for getting a judicial warrant.

“In my 50 years of experience, the scare is worse than the reality,” he said. The Trump administration, he added, is “making a statement.”

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What else to watch

The State Department will no longer issue [gender-neutral passports](#). A spokesperson said the department will only process passport applications for people identifying as male or female, echoing an executive order that the government would only recognize two sexes.

The policy reverses action by the Biden administration to allow nonbinary, intersex, and gender nonconforming people to select an X marker for their passports. Transgender applicants had been able to select their gender without providing medical documents.

The change will affect study-abroad students, academic researchers, and other travelers.

The U.S. embassy in Bogota [canceled visa appointments](#) following a dispute between Trump and Colombia's President Gustavo Petro over deportation flights. About 10,000 Colombian students study on American campuses, although this is not a prime season for student-visa issuances.

Longtime leader to leave IIE

Allan E. Goodman will step down as chief executive of the Institute of International Education after nearly three decades.

Goodman has steered the organization, which focuses on educational exchange and global student mobility, through conflicts, terrorism, and natural disasters, including, most recently, the pandemic. Under his watch, IIE expanded its efforts to aid displaced students, scholars, and artists.

Goodman, who called the role the "most challenging and rewarding experience of my professional life," will stay on until a new leader is named. In a [statement](#), IIE said it would conduct a global search for a new chief executive.

Around the globe

International students affected by the [wildfires in Los Angeles](#) could be eligible for grants from IIE's emergency student fund.

Students in Serbia have brought the country's universities to a standstill for two months with [nationwide protests](#) over corruption and abuses of power, sparked by the deadly collapse of a railway canopy.

College students in Ukraine will be required to complete [military training](#), and those who fail the training exam or refuse to swear a military oath won't be allowed to continue their studies.

Afghan professors will have to take [proficiency exams](#) focused on Islamic subjects to determine whether they are qualified. The Taliban also ordered women in administrative positions at universities to [step down](#).

The Philippine government will offer incentives to foreign colleges to set up [branch campuses](#) in the country.

China has ambitions to become an academic and research powerhouse, but the amount the country [spends on education](#) as a portion of its gross domestic product has declined.

Temple University, which has had a campus in Japan for more than four decades, opened a [satellite campus](#) in the city of Kyoto.

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