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Latitudes: Trump is ending immigration protections for Afghans, including students

1 message

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Latitudes

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As Trump ends protected status, Afghan students worry about the future

The Trump administration is [ending deportation protections](#) for thousands of Afghans in the United States, including students who fled their home country to continue their education.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said on Monday that it would terminate the temporary protected status program for Afghanistan as of July 12. Conditions in the country no longer meet qualifications for the program, which provides temporary legal status and authorization to work and study to migrants facing conflict or natural disasters at home, the department said.

“Afghanistan has had an improved security situation, and its stabilizing economy no longer prevent them from returning to their home country,” Kristi Noem, the secretary of homeland security, said in a [statement](#). Noem also suggested that the decision was part of an effort to deal with fraud in the immigration system.

The Biden administration put the humanitarian protections in place after the American military withdrawal and Taliban takeover in August 2021. Under the new government, access to education has been limited and women’s rights have been [curtailed](#).

“To go back would be to lose hope,” said one student who will graduate from an American college this month. The student, who asked not to be named because of concerns about her safety and the safety of her family back in Afghanistan, is now on a student visa and will start graduate school in the fall; she hopes to become a professor. “I love my country, but what future does it have for me?”

Another student said she was unable to concentrate during the final weeks of the semester after administration officials said unofficially that they did not plan to renew the immigration protections. She had hoped to be reunited with her family, who have been waiting in Pakistan for permission to come to the United States. Although her professors had given her extensions on final papers and allowed her to retake her exams, she said she struggled to study. “I stare at the pages and it’s a blur,” she said. “I don’t know how to think of statistics right now.”

Students are “terrified for their families and for their own futures,” said Shawn VanDiver, president of AfghanEvac, a group that has worked to relocate and resettle Afghans, many of whom were at risk because of their work with the American government. The impact on students is “not just abstract,” he said. “That fear shows up in real ways — missed assignments, deteriorating mental health, visa uncertainty.”

Colleges had rallied to [support displaced Afghan students](#), providing scholarship aid and emergency housing. Among the students are 150 from the Asian University for Women who were [airlifted](#) from Afghanistan on one of the last American flights from Kabul.

Kamal Ahmad, the university’s founder, said all of the AUW students were able to adjust their immigration status and have received green cards or have completed the last steps toward obtaining permanent residency.

About 9,600 Afghans had temporary protected status as of the fall of 2024; Afghanistan is one of 17 countries with the [designation](#). The Trump administration earlier ended the program for Venezuela, although courts have temporarily blocked the termination. On President Trump’s first day in office, he also suspended the entry of all refugees to the United States.

VanDiver said colleges could continue to assist Afghan students, offering counseling, emergency aid, and legal help. And they can continue to be their advocates.

“You out there in higher-education land, you can’t reverse federal immigration policy on your own, but you can mitigate the harm,” he said. “You can speak out when it matters.”

Upcoming Professional Development Program



This Mental Health Awareness Month, take charge of your role in creating a supportive environment and building strong mental health practices on your campus. Our virtual Mental Health Forum will provide faculty and staff with context, tools, and strategies to help manage their own anxiety amid the turbulent times higher ed is facing, as well as guidance on how to better support students through their struggles. [Learn more and register.](#)

Fulbright-Hays grants canceled

The U.S. Department of Education has canceled the competition for a trio of prestigious overseas research grants, nixing this year's awards after hundreds of applications had already been submitted.

In a [notice](#) published in the *Federal Register*, the Education Department said it was pausing applications to Fulbright-Hays fellowship programs as part of a reevaluation of competitive grants to ensure they “align with the objectives established by the Trump administration.” The affected fellowships support group projects, faculty research, and doctoral-dissertation research abroad.

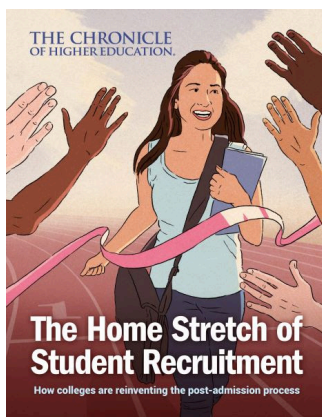
Last week's notice rescinds grant competitions announced months ago. More than 400 Fulbright-Hays applications had already been received, according to the former director of the department's International Studies Division, who was dismissed along with the rest of their colleagues during [mass layoffs](#) in March.

Without international-office staff members, the department could not properly administer the programs, the director, who was not named, said in a [court declaration](#) filed as part of a lawsuit challenging the Trump administration's efforts to dismantle the Department of Education.

The nearly 65-year-old fellowships are congressionally mandated and offer graduate students and scholars the opportunity to do research overseas and expand their knowledge of critical foreign languages. According to the *Federal Register* notice, the program evaluation is also meant to “foster consistency across all grant programs and enhance the economic effectiveness of federal education funding.”

It's unclear if the grant competition will be restarted next year.

From the Chronicle Store



The Home Stretch of Student Recruitment

When students accept an offer of admission but then don't show up on campus, it causes headaches for colleges. [Order this report](#) to learn how some institutions are working to reel in more accepted students and keep them on track to matriculate.

Penn included in foreign-funds probe

The University of Pennsylvania is the latest institution to be investigated by the Trump administration over foreign-funds disclosures.

In a [letter](#), the Department of Education asked Penn to provide an accounting of foreign gifts, donations, and contracts from individuals or entities abroad for the past eight years. It accused the university of possible “incomplete, inaccurate, and untimely disclosures.”

Similar investigations have already been opened into [Harvard University](#) and the [University of California at Berkeley](#).

Harvard and Berkeley are two of the largest recipients of foreign funds in the most-recent disclosure data, along with Stanford and Yale Universities and the University of California at Los Angeles. American colleges received \$290 million in overseas gifts and contracts between July 2024 and this February, according to [data](#) released by the Education Department.

In other developments:

- Secretary of State Marco Rubio said officials were [reviewing the visa status](#) of protesters at Columbia University who forced a shutdown of the campus’s main library.
- A Turkish graduate student at Tufts University was [released from federal custody](#) on a judge’s order. Rümeyşa Öztürk, whose arrest was captured on a viral video, was accused of engaging in activities “in support of Hamas.” But prosecutors never presented information other than an opinion piece critical of Israel that she co-authored.
- A federal judge in Oregon has extended a temporary order blocking the federal government from terminating the legal status of two international students. Although the Trump administration has [restored](#)

hundreds of student-visa records, it has not “repudiated the prior decision,” the judge [wrote](#).

- Picketers [protested](#) Dakota State University’s graduation over a decision to award an honorary degree to Kristi Noem, the secretary of homeland security. Students and faculty members opposed the honor because of Noem’s record on immigration, including her department’s efforts to revoke the legal status of thousands of international students.
- California officials pushed back against a Trump executive order threatening to penalize states that offer in-state tuition to undocumented students. The California Student Aid Commission said in a [memo](#) that the state’s policy, in place since 2001, “already complies with federal law.”
- International research projects could face disruption or delay if the State Department goes through with a plan to [eliminate](#) an office that handles global science and technology collaboration.

Meet Latitudes at NAFSA

Attending the [annual conference](#) of NAFSA: Association of International Educators later this month in San Diego? Join *The Chronicle* for a discussion about global education’s future on Thursday, May 29, at noon PT at the NAFSA pavilion in the expo hall.

You can help shape the conversation. Send your suggestions for hot topics, pressing challenges, and million-dollar questions we should tackle to karin.fischer@chronicle.com. See you there!

Around the globe

Fifty-five Democrats joined Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives in approving a [bill](#) that would restrict homeland-security funding from going to colleges with ties to “Chinese entities of concern.”

Advocacy groups are urging Florida lawmakers to [grandfather in](#) 6,000 undocumented students who currently pay in-state tuition after legislators voted to repeal the benefit.

Texas could overturn a two-decade-old [law](#) that provides lower residential tuition rates to some undocumented students.

Canada’s new government plans to keep [caps](#) on international-student visas.

The British government could [limit](#) the amount of time foreign graduate students can stay in the country and will consider putting a levy on the income colleges receive from international students.

Forty percent of the U.K.’s asylum claims in 2024 came from people who had first come there on a [student visa](#).

Four in five British universities are considering [research cuts](#) because of a financial squeeze.

A campus worker at Warsaw University in Poland was [killed](#) in an ax attack by a law student.

Colleges and schools were closed in India’s [Punjab state](#) because of fighting between India and Pakistan in nearby Kashmir.

Thanks for reading. I always welcome your feedback and ideas for future reporting, so drop me a line at karin.fischer@chronicle.com or

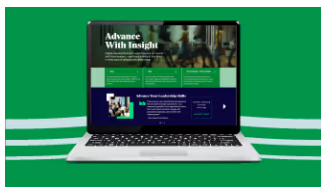
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