

Latitudes: As summer approaches, international students ask, should we stay or should we go?

1 message

Karin Fischer <newsletter@newsletter.chronicle.com>

Wed, May 7,
2025 at 11:02
AM

Reply-To: newsletter@newsletter.chronicle.com

To: amadorsapo@gmail.com

ADVERTISEMENT



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Leading the future of cancer
diagnostics with lollipops



We research
We activate
birmingham.ac.uk

Latitudes

THE CHRONICLE
OF HIGHER EDUCATION

You can also [read this newsletter on the web](#). Or, if you no longer want to receive this newsletter, [unsubscribe](#).

Plans? What plans?

The academic year is ending with uncertainty for international students, with an unpredictable policy environment upending summer plans.

In the wake of the mass cancellation of thousands of students' legal status and warnings of stricter screening at the U.S. border, some are rethinking plans to travel abroad or return home over the break.

Although the Trump administration [restored](#) student records in a federal database, the government last week introduced a [new policy](#) in court filings that would give immigration officials greater leeway in status terminations.

The outsized impact of government actions is reflected in a [new survey](#) that found seven in 10 American colleges consider government policies for foreign students or problems in getting a visa a “significant issue” when it comes to international enrollments.

A number of colleges, including [Duke University](#) and the [University of California at Berkeley](#), are warning international students about traveling overseas this summer. “We are advising current international students to travel cautiously this summer,” said Bonike Odegbami, director of international student services at Hamilton College, in New York State. “Students should only travel if absolutely necessary and after consulting with our office about the potential risks.”

One student said she was pulling out of a study-abroad trip to Africa next month despite semester-long preparation. Another told *The Chronicle* that she had canceled her flight home to China and would spend the summer with her American roommate. “I have too much anxiety” about international travel, the student said, even though she had not participated in campus protests and had no legal infractions, the two reasons cited by the administration for status terminations. (The students asked not to be identified because of fears about the impact of speaking out on their visa status.)

But another student said he felt he had no choice but to return to India, where he has an internship lined up. It's too late to find summer housing and if he stayed in the United States, he wouldn't be allowed to work, he said. "Yes, it's a calculated risk."

Fueling concern is a document introduced as evidence in one of dozens of lawsuits filed in response to the earlier status revocations. Titled "policy regarding termination of records," the document says that immigration officials have the "inherent authority" to cancel student records and adds two new reasons for government action — "failure to comply" with visa requirements or a visa revocation by the U.S. Department of State.

But the guidance, which is labeled for internal use by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security agency that oversees student visas, has not been published for public comment. Because of the absence of an official regulatory process, "we're not treating it as a formal policy," said Fanta Aw, executive director of NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Still, Aw said, "there has been great cost" to international students and American colleges. NAFSA, along with the Oxford Test of English and Studyportals, a search platform for international students, fielded a global survey that found growing uneasiness among colleges about the fallout of government policy on international enrollments.

Apprehension about the intrusion of government is not uniquely American, however. Universities in other major destination countries, like Australia and Canada, have similar worries, the survey found. Worldwide, 62 percent of respondents said government restrictions were a significant barrier for international students, overtaking cost concerns as the most pressing issue.

In other policy news, a [budget plan](#) released by the Trump administration would "essentially eliminate" State Department

exchange programs. The proposal would cut funding for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which runs prominent programs like Fulbright and Gilman, by \$691 million, or 93 percent.

While the proposal is just the starting point for the appropriations process, Mark Overmann, executive director of the Alliance for International Exchange, called the potential cuts “deeply disappointing.”

“The proposal demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of exchange programs and would do the exact opposite of making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous,” Overmann wrote on [LinkedIn](#).

ADVERTISEMENT

Upcoming Professional Development Program



In today's higher-ed landscape, where seismic disruptions to the status quo and external pressures are constant, trust between colleagues across campus is at an all-time low. To help staff manage these challenges and adapt to shifts, we're hosting a two-week virtual institute that will empower leaders to work more effectively to navigate the turbulence with collaboration, clarity, and resilience. [Learn more and register.](#)

NIH ends subawards to foreign researchers

The National Institutes of Health, the world's largest funder of biomedical research, will no longer allow grant recipients to make subawards to institutions outside the United States.

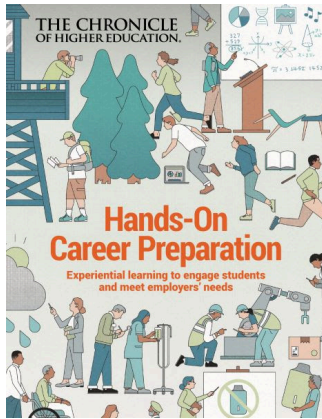
The change is a response to transparency concerns, Jay Bhattacharya, the NIH director, said in a [statement](#). A [government watchdog group](#) has criticized the agency for insufficient oversight of the international partners of American grantees. Last year, the NIH [issued](#) about 3,700 subawards to overseas institutions.

Tracking problems “can lead to a breakdown in trust and potentially the security of the U.S. biomedical research enterprise,” Bhattacharya said.

NIH will replace the practice of subawards with a [new grant structure](#) with separate linked awards for domestic and foreign researchers. The policy will apply to new and renewed grants starting in October.

But scientists fear the policy shift could disrupt international collaboration, an outcome with significant consequences given the global nature of much research.

From the Chronicle Store



Hands-On Career Preparation

Experiential-learning programs are grounded in the belief that true understanding comes from direct engagement with the world. [Order this report](#) to learn how to create learning experiences that align academic goals with work-force demands.

Illinois Tech to open India campus

Illinois Institute of Technology will be the first American institution to establish a degree-granting campus in India.

The Chicago university [announced](#) it had received approval from India's University Grants Commission to open a campus in Mumbai. Beginning in fall 2026, it will offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in high-demand fields like business, engineering, and computer science.

India has long been something of a [white whale](#): Interest in an American degree and lack of internal capacity to meet the educational needs of a fast-growing young population has made the country a natural site for institutions who want to open an overseas branch campus. But strict regulation prevented them from setting up shop.

The loosening of government rules in 2023 has made such outposts possible, and institutions like Britain's Southampton University and Australia's Deakin University have moved in.

Planning for the Illinois Tech campus has taken more than two years. But the university, which has seen its Indian enrollments soar, has had a presence in India dating back to the 1990s when it would courier

videocassettes of professors' lectures to be used in evening and weekend classes.

In other international-partnership news, the University of New Haven said it plans to [open a campus](#) in Saudi Arabia, while Rutgers University announced an [agreement](#) to collaborate with King Saud University on research and executive education.

How to recruit internationally on a budget

With a domestic demographic slump and questions about the value of a degree, many colleges are seeking to enroll more international students. But that doesn't mean there's much extra money to recruit them.

The Chronicle hosted a [webinar](#) last month on cost-effective overseas recruitment. I spoke with admissions veterans about strategies to stretch the recruitment dollar, from careful monitoring of data to armchair recruiting via Zoom. Here's a taste of their advice.

Students are your best ambassadors, so ensure they have a good experience on campus, said Eric Leise, director and senior international officer for international student and study abroad services at North Dakota State University. "Bring together groups of your students to talk about their experience and why they came to your institution. The best, long-term, cheapest way to recruit students is word of mouth, and that means engaging students who are right there on your campus."

Zig when others zag, recommends Kevin Timlin, executive director for international education and services at Southeast Missouri State

University. When the number of students from a particular country jumps, “the impulse is that needs to be a place that we go and recruit. Well, just about everybody’s thinking that, too,” he said. One of Southeast Missouri State’s strongest markets isn’t on that well-trod path, “but we developed a relationship with a lot of common ground. We knew that our programs resounded. We knew that we had a price point that was popular. Making an investment differentiated us from every other recruiter. It set us apart and helped us be successful.”

Find \$0 seats. Many courses and academic programs are undersubscribed, yet the college has already made an investment in those academic offerings, said Mallik Sundharam, vice president for enrollment management and student affairs at Illinois Tech. “Work with the registrar’s office and look at whether classes are full. There is a 30-student capacity in most classes, and in some classes there are only 20. Can I take what I call \$0 seats and be creative in how I offer this to a price-sensitive market?”

Spend limited resources where you see results, Timlin said. “The most expensive thing that you’re doing is something you’re putting money into that you’re not getting any return on. It doesn’t matter how much that amount is. There’s a lot of different ways that you could spend your money, but you have to be able to assess whether or not it’s effective.”

***The Chronicle* has another virtual forum, on international education in the hot seat, today, May 7, at 2 p.m. ET.** Join us for a timely and important conversation. The session is free, but [registration is required](#).

ADVERTISEMENT

Around the globe

Charles Lieber, a former Harvard University professor who was [found guilty](#) of lying to government officials about his ties to China, has taken a [job at Tsinghua University](#), one of China's most prestigious institutions.

Most international students who stay in the United States after graduation have degrees in in-demand STEM fields, and many work at large American companies, [new research](#) on employment trends suggests.

Utah Tech University is moving to cut [American Sign Language and Spanish](#) as part of a state mandate to college to eliminate programs with few graduates or that lead to lower-paying jobs.

The European Commission said one of its research-funding priorities is [scholarship on democracy](#) and governance.

The Serbian government is capping the amount of time academics can spend on [research](#) to five hours a week.

Hong Kong universities are experiencing a surge in [enrollments](#) of students who had planned to study in the United States.

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

From Chronicle Careers
