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Latitudes: An expanded travel ban could ensnare many more foreign students

1 message

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Latitudes

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More African students are coming to the U.S. A travel ban could stop that.

African countries that have been promising new sources of international students could be included in an expanded travel ban under consideration by the Trump administration.

Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal are on a list of 36 countries whose citizens could face restrictions coming to the United States.

Meanwhile, administration officials backed off threats to expel Chinese students as part of a trade deal with China. In a [social-media post](#), President Trump said the pending agreement would allow Chinese students to keep “using our colleges and universities,” which, he added, “has always been good with me!”

Last month, the U.S. Department of State announced [plans](#) to “aggressively revoke” the visas of students from China with Communist Party connections or who are studying in “critical” fields. The department did not say what fields would count as critical or how it would determine Communist Party ties.

Although the number of Chinese students at American colleges has fallen from the highs of the past decade, they remain one of the largest groups of foreign students. In the 2023-24 academic year, some 277,400 Chinese students held American student visas, second only to India.

The presence of large numbers of Chinese students means that they can get caught up in geopolitical tensions between the two countries. In his first term, Trump considered canceling all Chinese student visas and put restrictions on graduate students seeking to study in the United States.

It’s unclear if the on-again-off again crackdowns would affect perceptions of American higher education among Chinese families. One current student, who asked not to be named because he worried about the impact of speaking publicly on his student visa, compared

policy to a game of Ping-Pong. “We’re welcome, we’re not welcome. We’re welcome, we’re not welcome,” he said. “Which is it?”

It’s also unclear how an expansion of the travel ban could affect enrollments from new markets. Two dozen of the countries facing restrictions are in Africa, according to a memo first reported by [The Washington Post](#).

American colleges have increasingly eyed Africa, with its enormous population of young people, as [fertile ground for recruitment](#). Of the continent’s 1.25 billion people, 60 percent are under 25, and African universities lack sufficient capacity to serve them.

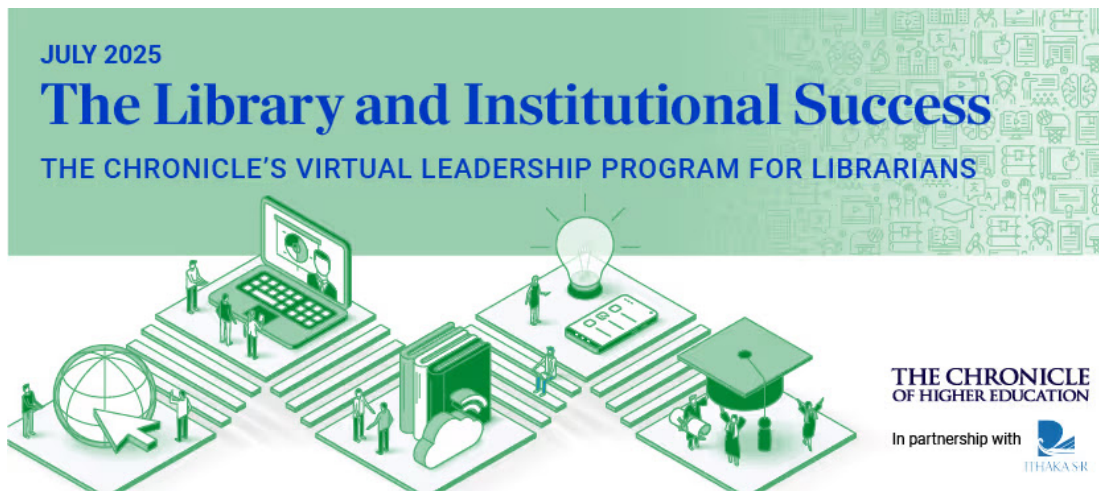
A sub-Saharan country, Nigeria last year cracked the top 10 of sending countries, with more than 20,000 students at American colleges. Ghana sends more than 9,000 students. The majority of students from both countries are enrolled in graduate programs.

The memo, sent on Saturday to American diplomats, gave countries 60 days to meet certain benchmarks such as cracking down on fraud, increasing the reliability of identity documents, and dealing with high rates of visa overstay in the United States.

New restrictions would be a significant expansion of a travel ban announced earlier this month, which bars all visitors from a dozen countries and places partial limits on another seven. Of the countries included in the initial ban, [Iran](#) is the most significant for higher education.

The State Department has not said whether the larger list of countries would face full or partial bans.

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Fulbright board resigns in protest

The members of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board resigned en masse to protest the Trump administration's ideological vetting of applicants, which they called "antithetical to the mission and values" of the flagship U.S. exchange program.

The State Department has been conducting an 11th-hour review of applications from American and foreign scholars, [vetoing](#) those that are not in line with presidential orders on issues including gender, diversity, and climate. The cancellation of the awards, at the end of a yearlong evaluation process, was done without consulting the Fulbright board or the program's foreign partners that jointly select and often fund the scholarships.

In a [statement](#) posted on Substack, the board's members said they were choosing to resign rather than "endorse unprecedented actions that we believe are impermissible under the law, compromise U.S. national interests and integrity, and undermine the mission and mandates Congress established for the Fulbright program nearly 80 years ago."

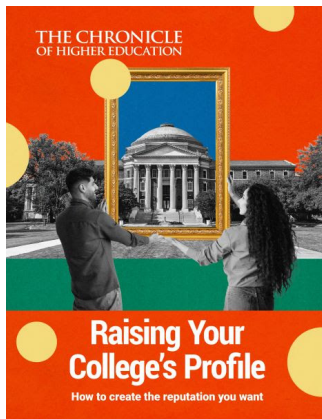
They accused the administration of having "usurped" the board's authority and said that senior officials have "refused to acknowledge or respond" to "legal issues" and "strong objections" raised by its members.

Eleven of the board's 12 members, all appointed by former President Joseph Biden, resigned. A State Department spokesperson called the move a "political stunt."

"It's ridiculous to believe that these members would continue to have final say over the application process, especially when it comes to determining academic suitability and alignment with President Trump's executive orders," the spokesperson said in a written statement.

The resignations will pave the way for Trump appointees to be named to the scholarship board. But board members said stepping aside was preferable than to "risk legitimizing" the administration's review and rejection of applicants on political grounds.

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Judge delays Harvard foreign-student ruling

A federal judge has delayed a decision in a lawsuit filed by Harvard University, saying she needed more time to consider a stronger injunction preventing the Trump administration from blocking the university from enrolling international students.

At a hearing on Monday, U.S. District Judge Allison Burroughs said she would [extend](#) temporary restraining orders currently in place while she made her ruling.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security had taken the unprecedented step of attempting to [revoke](#) Harvard's certification in the student-visa system, part of a political standoff between the Trump administration and one of the country's premier colleges. President Trump had also signed a proclamation freezing entry to the United States for foreign students and scholars at Harvard.

Burroughs's actions halt the entry ban, but Harvard officials have [reported](#) that some students were denied visas or detained at the airport. The government [argues](#) that the university cannot "properly vet, host, monitor, and if necessary discipline foreign students."

Around the globe

Three-quarters of voters in a new Quinnipiac Poll said welcoming international students to study on campus was good for the United States.

Faculty members at the University of Utah are critical of a partnership the institution struck with a college located on an Israeli settlement in Palestinian territory.

The U.S. Department of Justice has filed a lawsuit in Kentucky challenging a state regulation that provides lower in-state tuition rates to some undocumented students. A judge recently repealed a similar law in Texas after a federal legal challenge there. Students are now seeking to contest the Texas ruling.

A Russian researcher at Harvard who was threatened with deportation after she failed to declare scientific samples at a customs screening is free on bail.

Students at a medical college in India were among more than two dozen people killed on the ground when an airliner crashed just after takeoff on their campus. Only one of the flight's passengers survived.

Japan is joining the list of countries competing to attract scientists driven off by American funding cuts and policy changes. The government released a 100-billion yen policy package to improve the research environment to be more competitive in appealing to foreign researchers.

British spending on scientific research will remain flat for the next few years.

Australian university have yet to adopt a new definition of [antisemitism](#), concerned that the policy could constrain academic freedom.

And finally ...

Each year, NAFSA: Association of International Educators tallies the impact of international students on the American economy, last year [estimated](#) at nearly \$44 billion.

But do those figures factor in end-of-the-semester dumpster diving?

In many college towns, scavengers [reuse or resell](#) furniture, clothing, and other items that students leave behind at the end of the academic year. One kept a spreadsheet with her finds, including a lucite table and Valentino sneakers, that she estimates retailed for a total of \$6,600.

Scavenging veterans said those looking for a big haul should focus on campuses with large numbers of international students who discard possessions they are unable to carry with them on their flights home. And bring hand sanitizer, they recommend.

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