

Latitudes: Fulbright and other global-education programs are spared from Trump's cuts

1 message

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Latitudes

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After cuts, some exchange programs go forward

After canceling funding for a number of academic- and cultural-exchange programs, the Trump administration is lifting its hold on 28 others, including the flagship Fulbright Program, allowing them to move ahead in the grantmaking process.

Meanwhile, key U.S. senators are adding legislative safeguards to try to prevent a repeat of administration actions to block spending already approved by Congress.

Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate Appropriations Committee have included [explicit language](#) directing how funding should be allocated in spending bills for the 2026 fiscal year, which begins October 1. They have also added new requirements for federal agencies to report to Congress when contract and grant awards are terminated.

The Senate has not yet passed the appropriations bill for the U.S. Department of State, and it's unclear if the House of Representatives would agree to such constraints on the administration.

The White House Office of Management and Budget [retroactively canceled](#) \$100 million in spending for two-dozen State Department exchange programs for the current fiscal year, inserting itself in a typically pro forma administrative process. International-education groups are [lobbying](#) Congress to restore those funds.

In addition to Fulbright, the budget office has [released its hold](#) on other State Department international-education programs, among them the Gilman Scholarship, which sends low-income and first-generation students overseas; the Critical Language Scholarship, which supports intensive study of critical languages; and EducationUSA, a worldwide network of centers advising students interested in studying in America.

Mark Overmann, executive director at the Alliance for International Exchange, said the grants could be finalized and awarded within

weeks.

The backdoor cuts have occurred throughout the federal government. *Inside Higher Ed* [reports](#) that grants administered by the U.S. Department of Education for college-based centers dedicated to foreign-language and area studies have also been frozen, leading to concern that those programs could be eliminated.

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Foreign-student falloff could ripple beyond campuses

Restaurant workers and retail salespeople are among those who could lose their jobs because of an expected drop in international students on American campuses this fall.

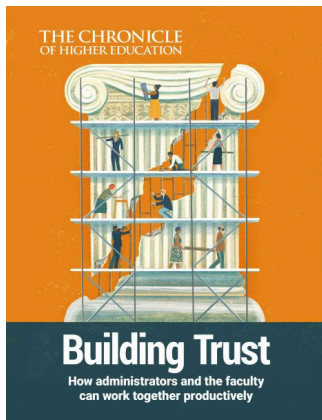
Each 10-percent decrease in spending by foreign students would be a \$3.4-billion hit to the United States' gross domestic product, according to an [analysis](#) released on Tuesday by IMPLAN, an economic-software and analysis company.

A 10-percent decline could also cost 26,800 jobs. Everyday service industries that rely on student spending could be the most at risk, including restaurants, grocery stores and other food and beverage retailers, hospitals, and doctor's offices.

The IMPLAN analysis is the latest projection of the impact of plummeting international enrollments on college towns and the American economy as a whole. NAFSA: Association of International Educators [estimates](#) that severe backlogs in awarding student visas could cause the number of students from abroad to dip by 15 percent. That could have a \$7-billion ripple effect on the economy, NAFSA said.

But economic arguments for the value of international students may be [falling flat](#), eclipsed by the politics of immigration.

Relatedly, international-enrollment declines have led some selective colleges to offer [last-minute admission](#) to students on their wait lists, potentially poaching them from other institutions that they had committed to attend.



Building Trust

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Bucking his own policies, Trump says international students are welcome

President Trump called allowing Chinese students to study in the United States “very important” to the relationship between the two countries.

The American “college system would go to hell very quickly” without the presence of students from China and other countries, he added.

The president’s remarks, made during a lengthy [Cabinet meeting](#) on Tuesday, were striking because of their contrast with his own [policies](#). Since taking office, the administration has suspended international students’ legal status, instituted mandatory social-media screening for all students from abroad, and threatened substantive changes to visa rules.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has singled out Chinese students, saying his department would “[aggressively revoke](#)” the visas of students from China, in particular those studying in “critical fields” or with connections to the Chinese Communist Party. He and other

administration officials have called the presence of Chinese students on American college campuses a security threat.

But during the Cabinet meeting, Trump sounded a different note: “I hear so many stories about we’re not going to allow their students — we’re going to allow their students to come in.” He said the United States would admit 600,000 students from China.

There were about 277,000 Chinese students enrolled in American colleges in the 2023-24 academic year, according to the most recent [Open Doors report](#).

Trump’s statement was criticized by some of his own supporters. “There should be no foreign students here for the moment,” Steve Bannon, a former adviser, said.

Surveys focus on international-student impact

The Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration is undertaking two new surveys on the contributions of international students: One is for [international students and alumni](#) to complete directly. The other is for [faculty and staff members](#) at American colleges to fill out or share with current and former international students, scholars, and postdocs they’ve supervised. The surveys aim to capture the many ways international talent strengthens American higher education, local and regional economies, research, innovation, entrepreneurship, and the national economy.



Around the globe

Federal agencies have released a [joint security bulletin](#) warning colleges about foreign threats to research and offering guidance about safeguarding their work from poaching and espionage.

The State Department said all holders of valid American visas will be subject to “[continuous vetting](#),” but it’s unclear how the new policy will affect international students and scholars.

A coalition of House Democrats hoping to spur action on immigration reform has released a [policy outline](#) that includes issuing 100,000 additional green cards for international graduates of American colleges.

Participants in teacher exchanges through the Fulbright Program could qualify for public-service college-loan forgiveness under a [proposed bill](#).

Gov. JB Pritzker has signed legislation that allows Illinois residents to qualify for [in-state tuition](#) regardless of immigration status.

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education said in a [court filing](#) that it supports a federal-government effort to overturn a state policy providing tuition benefits to undocumented students. The repeal of a similar law in Texas has caused [confusion](#) among state colleges.

Russian missile strikes destroyed the main academic building of [Sumy State University](#), in Ukraine.

A political campaign in India is encouraging students to boycott study in the United States, along with other American-made goods, because of [tariffs](#) imposed by the U.S. government.

Remote testing for the law-school entrance exam has been suspended in China because of allegations of [cheating](#).

China will relax [visa rules](#) for foreign STEM researchers to encourage more short-term exchanges, visiting fellowships, and international collaboration.

A group of Ghanaian scholarship students will be able to continue their studies after their government made a \$1-million [payment](#) to the University of Memphis, but the funds are only a portion of what is [owed](#) to cover their tuition and living expenses.

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