

Latitudes: Why reporting on foreign students has gotten so tough

1 message

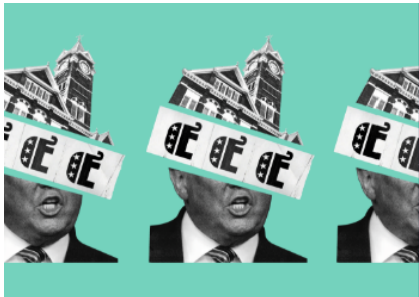
Karin Fischer <newsletter@newsletter.chronicle.com>

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Latitudes

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**The paradox of reporting on international
students**

By the third or fourth rejection, I knew how the conversation was going to go: *We trust your reporting, Karin. But the issue is just too sensitive. We can't be in the headlines.*

As the semester began, I set out to write what I thought would be a straightforward article: The unprecedented summertime [disruption in student-visa issuances](#) had put international enrollments this fall into question. With political pressures presaging greater upheaval ahead, I planned to go to a campus to report on the potential consequences — academically, culturally, and financially — of American colleges being able to welcome fewer foreign students.

But then the refusals started coming — nearly a dozen colleges turned down my request. Others didn't return my messages. Administrators, many of whom I've known for years, gave me the same apologetic explanation: International students are just too much of a hot potato in the current climate to go public with their concerns.

It's a curious time to be reporting on international education, which is at the intersection of two highly charged issues under the current presidential administration: higher education and immigration. I can only imagine what it is like to be working in the field.

The result is a paradox: The stakes for colleges to speak out about the impact of policy changes on their ability to attract students from overseas are higher than ever before. The risks of doing so are also greater.

Professional associations have stepped into the gap. And one institution, Arizona State University, eventually allowed me to visit. In Tempe, I got a glimpse of what could be lost: Emptier classrooms. Understaffed research labs. Diminished tuition revenue and a hit to the local economy. A thread gone from the fabric of campus culture.

"Every student that's not able to get here is a problem," Matt López, ASU's deputy vice president for enrollment services, told me.

You can read my story, [The Missing Students](#).

Upcoming Premium Webinar

The banner features a blue background. On the left, the text 'THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION' is in white, followed by 'Higher Ed in Crisis' in large white font, and 'Strategies for Managing Response and Communication' in smaller white font. On the right, there is an illustration of a hand holding a magnifying glass over a building labeled 'UNIVERSITY', with several microphones positioned in front of it. At the bottom left, a black box contains the text 'PREMIUM WEBINAR'. Next to it, the date and time 'NOVEMBER 12 | 1 PM ET' are displayed. On the bottom right, a white button with a blue border says 'Sign Up Now'.

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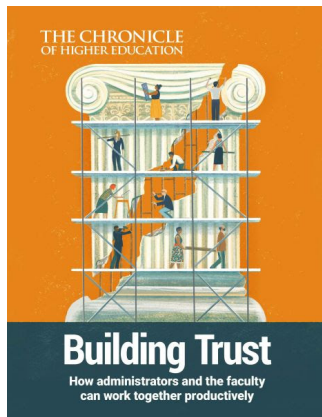
H-1B fee exempts foreign students

Student-visa holders and others who switch their legal status within the United States won't have to pay a new \$100,000 fee on skilled-worker visas.

[Guidance](#) issued on Monday by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security clarified that international graduates of American colleges will be exempt from the fee imposed by the Trump administration. Both higher-education and employer groups had been [concerned](#) that the cost would disrupt the foreign-talent pipeline and make the United States a less attractive destination for students from overseas.

A second lawsuit challenging the fee has been filed by the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#).

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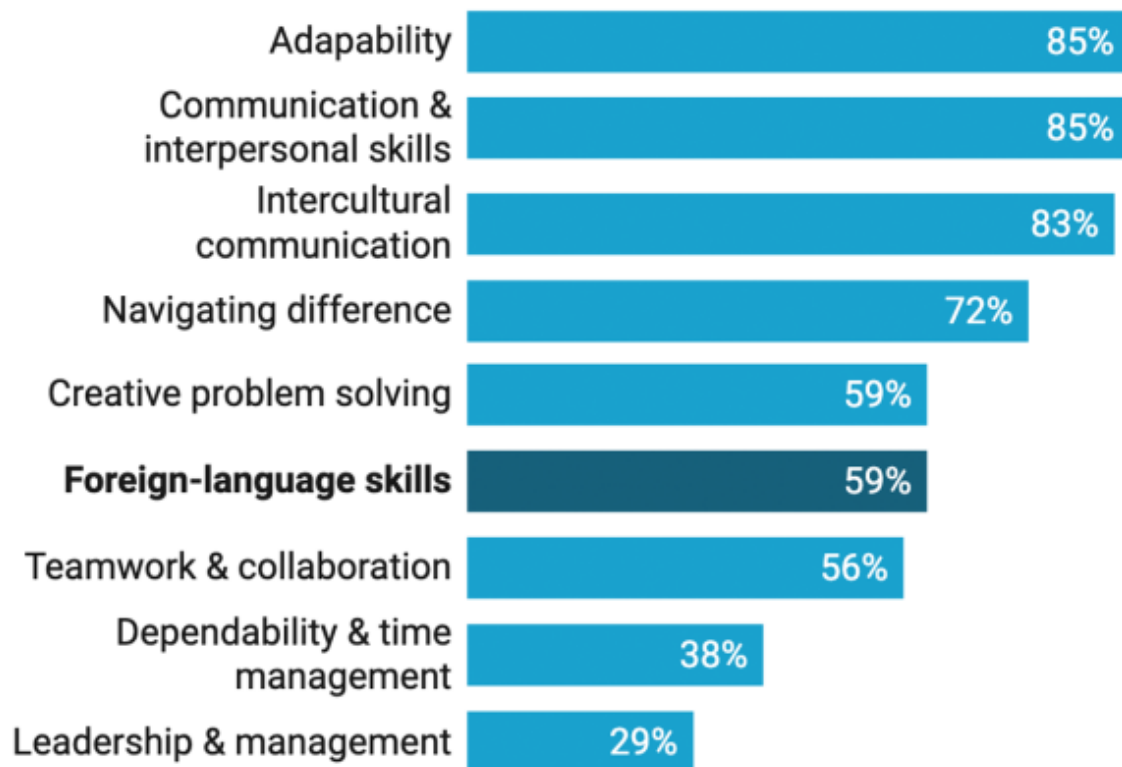
Building Trust

Building trust between college leaders and faculty members can be difficult even in ordinary times, but higher ed continues to face an extraordinary set of challenges. [Order this report](#) for insights on forging stronger, more productive relationships.

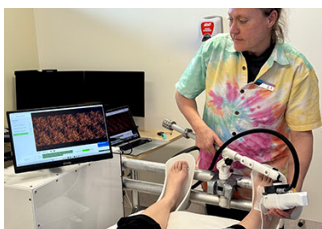
Adapability and communication among skills picked up studying abroad

Learning a foreign language ranks fairly low on the list of work-related skills that education-abroad alumni said they gained while studying overseas.

Fifty-nine percent of current students and graduates named learning a language as a competency that they picked up through international study in a [survey](#) conducted by the Forum on Education Abroad. By contrast, more than 80 percent credited studying abroad with improving their adaptability, interpersonal skills, and intercultural communication.



A likely reason for this result is the growth in programs that do not include language requirements. But even those alumni who studied abroad in a foreign language reported higher rates of development in other skill areas. The survey, of 8,000 alumni, is the largest known career-focused study of education abroad.



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Around the globe

A provision on research security in a defense-authorization bill would apply to every research agreement, study-abroad exchange,

and language program over the last five years between American colleges and those in China and other countries, higher-education groups warned in a letter asking Congress to [strike what they argued was overly broad language](#).

A Pennsylvania man has submitted an [eight-page handwritten motion](#) seeking to dismiss a federal judge who [ruled](#) that attempts to deport campus protesters violates the free-speech rights of international students and scholars. Meanwhile, the Knight First Amendment Center at Columbia University, which had represented the plaintiffs in the case, said the State Department's revocation of visas over statements related to the killing of the conservative activist Charlie Kirk was [counter to the judge's ruling](#).

State officials, immigration groups, and student journalists were among those [filing briefs](#) in a [second case](#) challenging constitutionality of the administration's student-visa policies brought by Stanford University's student newspaper.

German officials canceled the [student visa](#) of an American who participated in pro-Palestinian protests.

Britain is limiting the time international students can [remain in the country](#) and work after graduation.

Caps on international enrollment in Canada have hit universities in the [Atlantic provinces](#), the country's poorest region, especially hard.

Student protesters helped topple the government in [Madagascar](#).

A Chinese government plan to award special visas to attract science and technology graduates has received [backlash](#) from members of the public worried that foreigners will take jobs.

And finally ...

An American passport isn't the license to travel it once was.

For the first time, the United States has fallen off the list of the world's most powerful passports, according to the [Henley Passport Index](#), which ranks countries on the number of destinations where travelers can go without visas.

The United States, which topped the list just a decade ago, is now tied for 12th with Malaysia. Holders of passports from Singapore, South Korea, and Japan have more entrée around the globe.

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](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Bluesky](#). If you like this newsletter, please share it with colleagues and friends. They can [sign up here](#).

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