

Latitudes: A silent policy delay

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It's kind of the greatest hits of the past nine months of how the Trump administration is trying to advance its agenda for higher education.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Latitudes



By Karin Fischer

In this week's Latitudes: A student detained because of her political activity has left for her home country. Study-abroad risk data. Florida wants to bar undocumented students from college. But first ...

'IMMIGRATION LIMBO'

A federal judge in California has ordered the Trump administration to lift an indefinite hold on granting employment authorization to students and scholars from countries included in a presidential travel ban.

Applicants for optional practical training and other work approvals are in "immigration limbo" because of the delay, Susan Van Keulen, a magistrate judge, wrote in her

[order](#). While they are legally in the United States, they could violate their visa status if they are neither able to work nor study.

One third of the plaintiffs in the California lawsuit are seeking authorization for OPT, the popular program that allows international graduates to stay and work in the United States for up to three years after they finish their degree. Van Keulen's preliminary injunction covers only those who are part of the lawsuit — but with the end of the academic year approaching, more new graduates could be affected.

Let me rewind the tape: Last June, President Trump announced an [executive order](#) barring all visitors, including students, from Iran and a dozen other countries. (The restrictions were later [expanded](#) to, among others, citizens of Ghana and Nigeria.)

Because it was an entry ban, the president's proclamation didn't affect current visa holders who were allowed to stay in the United States. That population includes more than 9,000 students from Ghana, 12,000 from Iran, and 20,000 from Nigeria.

Then, at the end of the year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued a pair of [memoranda](#) halting the approval process for work authorizations and other immigration-benefit requests for citizens of travel-ban countries, arguing that the president's authority to block entry extended to the adjudication of benefits. Van Keulen challenged the stance in her ruling.

The hold was to conduct a comprehensive review of the process for national-security concerns. Officials haven't given a timeline for its conclusion.

But OPT itself operates on a tight timeline — applications must be submitted within 60 days of graduation, and students have a narrow window to find work or leave the country (or continue their studies).

I spoke with one student on the cusp of graduating with a Ph.D. in statistics and the offer of a faculty job. Her husband has not been able to start a postdoctoral fellowship because of the suspension. Both are Iranian.

Students and scholars are struggling to pay bills and with the loss of health insurance. Because of the war, they cannot count on support from — or even communication with — family in Iran.

"We came here legally, studied, worked hard, and believed in the opportunities this country offers," the student said. She blamed the "silent policy delay" for putting her future on hold.



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STUDENT THREATENED WITH DEPORTATION LEAVES THE U.S.

“I am choosing to return home as planned to continue my career as a woman scholar without losing more time to the state-imposed violence and hostility I have experienced in the United States.”

— — *Rümeysa Öztürk*

Öztürk, a Tufts University graduate student whose arrest by immigration officers went viral, has voluntarily left the United States to return to her home country, Turkey. In a [statement](#) released by the American Civil Liberties Union, Öztürk said she struck a settlement with the U.S. government to dismiss immigration charges against her.

Öztürk was detained and threatened with deportation after writing an article in the student newspaper in support of Palestinians. She earned a doctorate in child study and human development from Tufts.

FLORIDA SEEKS TO BLOCK UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS FROM COLLEGE

Florida could bar undocumented students from attending public colleges in the state.

A [rule](#) under consideration by Florida's Department of Education would require applicants to provide “clear and convincing documentation” of citizenship and immigration status for admission to one of the state's 28 public colleges. The proposed rule, which will have a hearing in May, would not apply to public universities.

Meanwhile, lawmakers in Illinois have passed legislation to allow [undocumented students](#) to pay lower in-state tuition rates.

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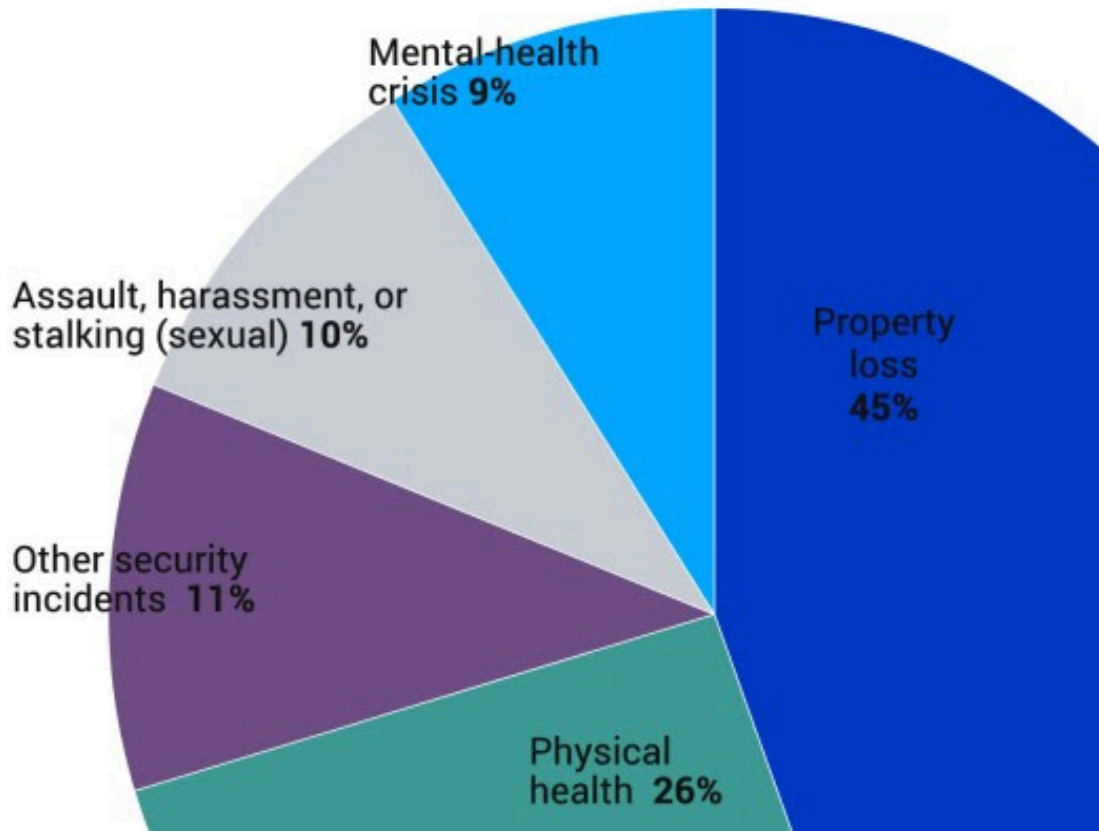
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STUDY ABROAD AND RISK

About one in 66 Americans who studied abroad last year was involved in a health or safety incident, according to a [report](#) from a risk-analysis pilot project.

The frequency of such incidents declined slightly from 2024, with theft and illness the most common.



The Forum on Education Abroad collected and analyzed data from 12 study-abroad provider groups and 10 colleges.

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The High-Stakes Hunt for Research Funds

The second Trump administration's slashing of support for academic research has left universities in disarray. [Order this report](#) to explore how institutions are recalibrating their research agendas in an uncertain funding climate.

AND FINALLY ...

The European Humanities University has been labeled an “[extremist](#)” organization by officials in Belarus, who accuse the liberal-arts institution of aiding foreign intelligence operations. Supporters fear the designation is meant to discourage students from enrolling in the university, which operates in exile in Lithuania.

British universities have filed a lawsuit after the government informed 22,000 students taking weekend college courses that they were erroneously given loans and would have to [pay the money back](#) immediately.

European funding for research done at Israeli universities has been [cut in half](#) because some European colleges and individual scientists are refusing to collaborate, in protest of Israeli action in Iran, Lebanon, and Gaza.

Were Iranian universities targeted in attacks because they do research that has [military uses](#)?

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