
Latitudes: American brain drain

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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."

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Latitudes



By *Karin Fischer*

In this week's Latitudes: The Trump administration wants to rescind rules for international-education programs. More wrangling over undocumented students' access to college. French colleges' €1 meal deals. But first ...

YOUNG SCIENTISTS RETHINK AMERICAN CAREERS



One in four young scientists who had planned to stay in the United States is reconsidering because of federal-funding cuts, changes to research and immigration policy, and other disruptions to American science.

A [new working paper](#) documents a striking swing in sentiment among Ph.D. students and postdoctoral researchers over just six months, before and after President Trump took office. Intent to remain in the country fell from 93 percent to 72 percent in March 2025. While the decline is greatest among foreign scientists, there is a “meaningful shift” among Americans’ willingness to pursue careers abroad.

Young scientists have the greatest career flexibility and are the least invested in the current system. An outflow of early-career researchers could affect the future American scientific work force.

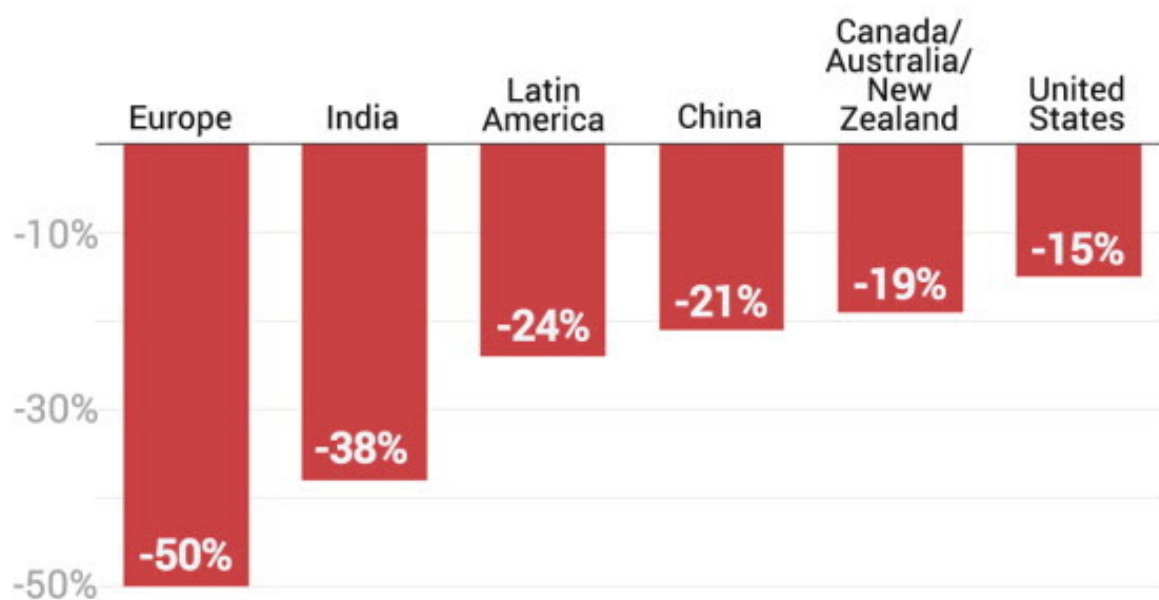
“Given what we already know about the fragility of early scientific careers, it is difficult to construct a scenario in which these shifts are benign,” the paper’s authors write. “At minimum, they indicate that the current policy environment is generating substantial uncertainty and dissatisfaction among precisely the people the scientific enterprise needs to attract and retain.”

The authors — Pierre Azoulay of MIT, Raffaella Sadun of Harvard, and Daniela Scur of Cornell — had already been conducting a large-scale research project on

management practices in biomedical labs when the Trump administration began to make policy changes. They were able to field a short supplemental survey to graduate students and postdocs at 2,466 labs across the country, asking about their current career intentions and those six months prior.

The survey also asked about respondents' satisfaction with pursuing a Ph.D. and whether they planned to work in academe.

The largest decline in intent to stay in the United States, about 50 percentage points, was among young European scientists. The six-month drop for scientists from India was 38 percentage points, 24 percentage points for scientists from Latin America, and 21 percentage points for scientists from China.



The working paper measures sentiment, not actual behavior, the authors note. But the findings cut across different types of scientists and labs: postdocs and graduate students, elite and non-elite labs, and labs with multiyear grants and those with unpredictable funding streams.

The shift “appears to reflect a broader reassessment of the U.S. scientific environment,” they conclude.

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UNDOCUMENTED-STUDENT UPDATES

- **Florida bans undocumented students:** The state Board of Education voted Tuesday to [bar undocumented immigrants](#) from enrolling in public colleges, which offer education and job training.
- **Universities could be subject to a de facto prohibition:** The Board of Governors that oversees Florida's 12 universities is considering an [amendment](#) of its own to prevent people "present in the United States unlawfully" from initially enrolling at institutions that had not admitted "all academically qualified applicants" in the previous two years. (That would likely preclude any institution with selective admissions from taking undocumented students.)
- **Top Kansas officials square off:** The Republican attorney general Kris Kobach agreed to settle a lawsuit filed by the Trump administration to roll back state policy providing lower in-state tuition rates to some undocumented students. Not so fast, said Gov. Laura Kelly, a Democrat, who filed a motion to intervene in the case to [preserve](#) the 20-year-old law.
- **More state policies are challenged:** The U.S. Department of Justice [announced](#) this week that it was suing Massachusetts and Rhode Island over their tuition-equity policies.

FEDS WANT MORE FLEXIBILITY OVER INTERNATIONAL-ED PROGRAMS

The Trump administration has announced plans to rescind rules governing the Fulbright-Hays program and other international-education and foreign-language programming to allow for greater flexibility in selecting awardees that is aligned with "current and evolving priorities and needs."

In a [notice](#) published in today's Federal Register, the U.S. Department of Education said current rules prevent it from nimbly shifting the programs' focus to meet national and security imperatives. "Given the ever-changing nature of international affairs, it is crucial to review existing regulations and reform the program to allow applicable entities to prepare their applications with more creativity, less prescription, and in a manner that is responsive to current events and administration priorities," the notice said.

Although the Education Department proposed the changes, the U.S. Department of State [took over administration](#) of these programs last fall. The administration also tried to strip spending from the programs before Congress [restored the funding](#).

The public has 30 days to comment on the proposal.

UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP | JULY 2026



The Chronicle's Library and Institutional Success Program

The library plays a key role on campuses—as a hub of research, a center for data and technology, and as a convening space. *The Chronicle* and Ithaka S+R are hosting a virtual leadership series to help librarians demonstrate the value of library services and help boost institutional success through innovation. [Learn more and register today.](#)

AROUND THE GLOBE

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Trump administration can [terminate federal legal protections](#) for Haitians and Syrians, including students and scholars, who have fled their home because of conflict.

Students from mainland China are having second thoughts about studying in [Hong Kong](#).

Researchers at the University of Sydney are [forbidden](#) from working with counterparts in Iran, Russia, Belarus, and North Korea except in “exceptional circumstances.”

Foreign branch campuses are concentrated in a few wealthier regions of [India](#), raising concerns about equity and access.

France plans to step up efforts to [recruit](#) foreign doctoral students and faculty members.

FROM THE CHRONICLE STORE



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 ...

Speaking of France, students there are getting a discount in campus dining halls. Starting in May, universities began offering [€1 meals](#) to all students, regardless of income. For about \$1.17, diners get an appetizer, main course, and dessert.

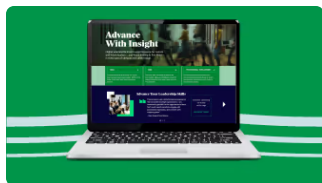
Students are already planning how to spend the money they save. One possibility: Eating at a restaurant.

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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