
Latitudes: Visa changes are coming, but the headaches are here

1 message

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Latitudes



By Karin Fischer

In this week's Latitudes: Indians protest national-exam leak. Readers share their own study-abroad experience. How American cities stack up against the world's best for students. But first ...

'OBSTACLES ARE COMING INTO SHARP FOCUS'



American consular officers have reportedly refused student-visa applicants because they do not have paperwork that complies with new regulations — even though the rules do not take effect for seven weeks.

Several colleges said students applying at the U.S. embassy in Belgrade, Serbia, have been turned away and told to come back with forms that list strict end dates for their degrees. The new policy — which has been [published](#) but has a September 15 start date — makes visas valid for four years or the anticipated length of a student's degree, whichever is shorter.

Currently, most students can remain in the United States as long as they are full-time students.

The apparent mix-up could be an omen of the confusion that could be precipitated by the [most consequential change](#) to student visas in years. It raises questions about what guidance and training will be provided to government employees charged with the rules' implementation — both in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which oversees immigration law and drafted the regulations, and in the U.S. Department of State, which is in charge of issuing visas.

It's unclear if the refusals were isolated incidents. On Tuesday evening, a spokesperson said that the State Department needed more time to respond to *Chronicle* questions. Administrators at colleges with affected students asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue.

International-education groups have been tracking concerns including potential preemptive actions taken by embassies, backlogs caused by students seeking to enter or return to the United States before the effective date, and uncertainty for students already in the country who plan to transfer or pursue postgraduate work. (International students are restricted from changing programs under the new regulations.)

Issues reported by colleges reflect “the tremendous range of impending harms, burdens, or obstacles that are coming into sharp focus now that the final rule is out,” said Miriam Feldblum, executive director of the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration.

It’s concerning that problems are emerging even before the rules take effect, said Fanta Aw, executive director of NAFSA: Association of International Educators. The group has been collecting outstanding questions and problems with the regulation. “NAFSA will continue to flag incongruencies with the Departments of State and Homeland Security,” Aw said.

In this week’s survey, I want to know **how you’re coping with the student-visa changes.**

Which of the following best describes your state of mind?

- Stressed, but I believe my team has a plan in place to serve students.
- No biggie — I know all 156 pages of the *Federal Register* notice forward and backward.
- Panicked. The anxiety (and the many, many emails from students) are keeping me up at night.
- None of the above.

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STUDENT PROTESTERS FORCE OUT INDIA’S EDUCATION MINISTER

India's education minister has resigned after [weeks of protests](#) sparked by the leak of a national medical-school exam. Dharmendra Pradhan had been accused of not doing enough to stanch the release of details of high-stakes entrance tests. Millions of students were forced to retake the May exam, and some committed suicide.

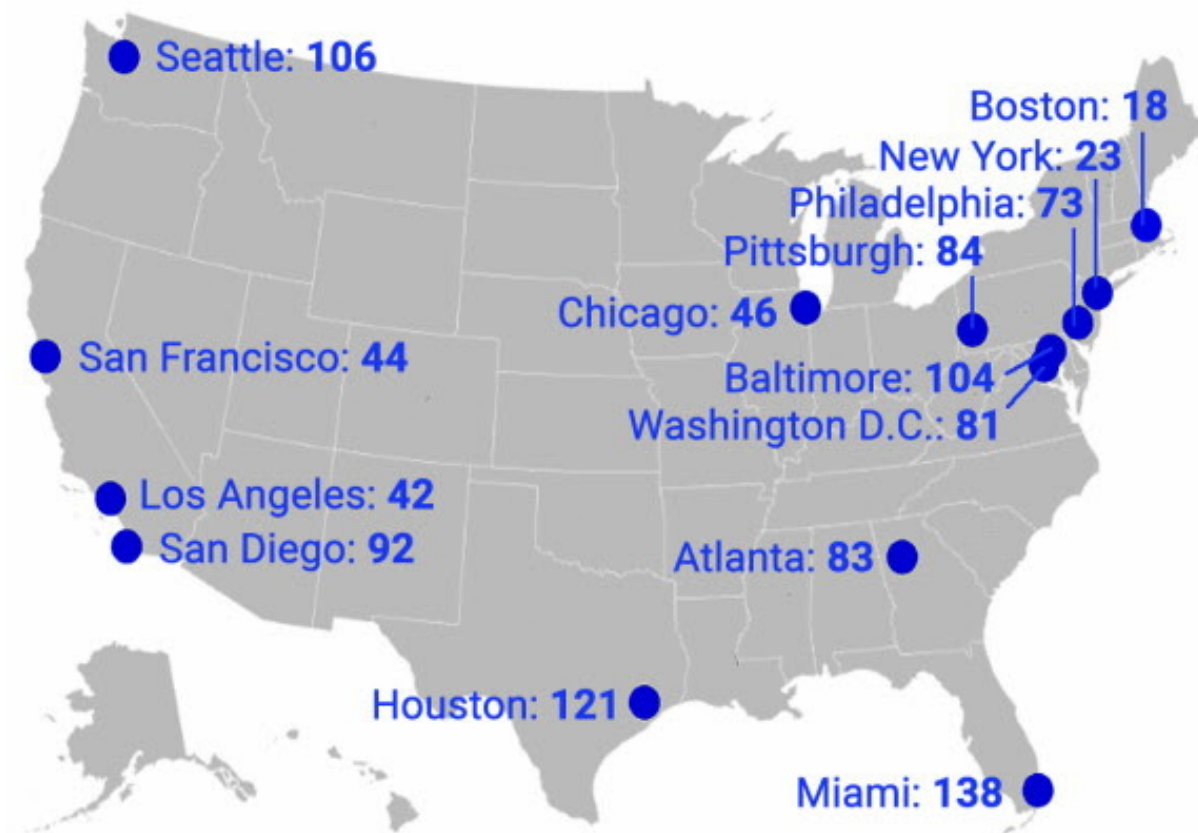
Student protests across India's major cities are a reflection of dissatisfaction with the country's educational system and high youth unemployment.

WHAT ARE THE WORLD'S BEST CITIES TO BE A STUDENT?

Americans may see Boston as the quintessential college town, but it is just 18th on a ranking of the world's best cities to be a student.

Seoul, in South Korea, took first spot in the [ranking](#) from QS Quacquarelli Symonds, a global-education company based in Britain, followed by Tokyo, London, and Melbourne, in Australia. Boston received the highest score of 14 American cities included in the ranking.

Locations are rated based on six factors including student views, academic quality, and appeal to employers.



Is it possible to do an apples-to-apples comparison of, say, Singapore (No. 11) to San Diego (No. 92)? That's up for debate.

But it's worth noting what QS termed a "drag" on the United States: cost. No American city ranks higher than 134th of 150 cities for affordability. Boston is No. 149, offsetting its high marks in other areas.

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AROUND THE GLOBE

A federal judge has [ruled](#) that an Illinois law allowing some undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition is unconstitutional. Meanwhile, [Colorado officials](#) signaled plans to challenge a lawsuit brought by the Trump administration seeking to overturn a similar law in that state.

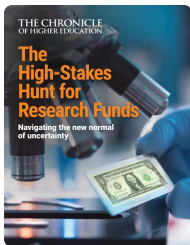
Rider University will end a longstanding [China partnership](#) when the agreement expires later this year. The New Jersey institution, which is on probation by its accreditor, cited low participation.

Two Chinese universities have been added to a [list](#) of institutions that the U.S. Department of Defense said pose a risk to American research and security.

A court in South Korea found that a ban on political activity by faculty unions was [unconstitutional](#).

Five members of Israel's Council for Higher Education have resigned in protest of legislation to expand [gender-segregated studies](#).

FROM THE CHRONICLE STORE



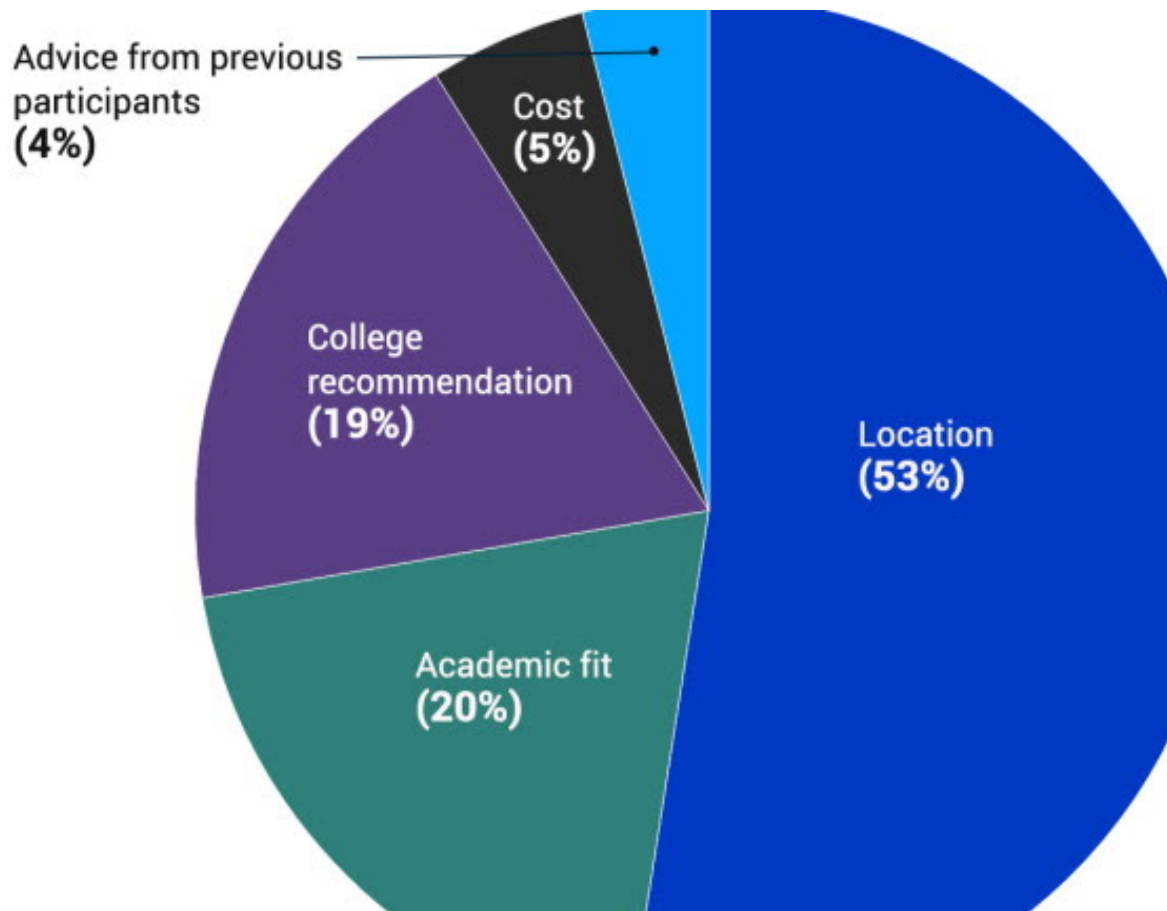
The High-Stakes Hunt for Research Funds

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.

HOW YOU STUDIED ABROAD

When it comes to study abroad, it's about location, location, location.

More than half of readers who responded to a [recent flash survey](#) said program destination was the primary driver in deciding where to study overseas. Of course, as one noted, multiple factors often come into play: "I picked a destination because it was my heritage and linked to my major, but the reality was that I was desperate to get as far away from home as possible. So I killed two birds with one stone."



More than 75 of you took the time to explain your answer — and to reminisce. Here are a few lightly edited responses:

- “I had been studying Japanese since elementary school. It was Japan or bust for me. :)”
- “I knew I was going to study abroad way before I was even thinking about what I was going to study. My grandmother had studied abroad and went on to teach French, so it was always something we talked about.”
- “I picked one of the programs included in my tuition. Having financial aid travel with me was huge.”
- “I had initially chosen an English-language program because I was intimidated. A study-abroad adviser encouraged me to apply to a language-intensive program in Bologna instead based on my academic preparation and goals. I took her advice, and it changed my life.”
- “I chose Nepal. It was a place that I knew nothing about and wanted to know more.”
- “I wanted to go somewhere no one I knew had been and spoke English. In 1997, that was Australia.”

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

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