
Latitudes: What's next for a challenge to visa rules?

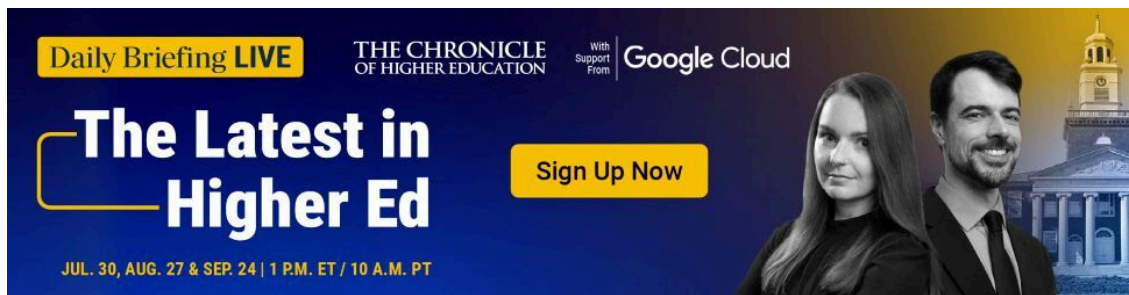
1 message

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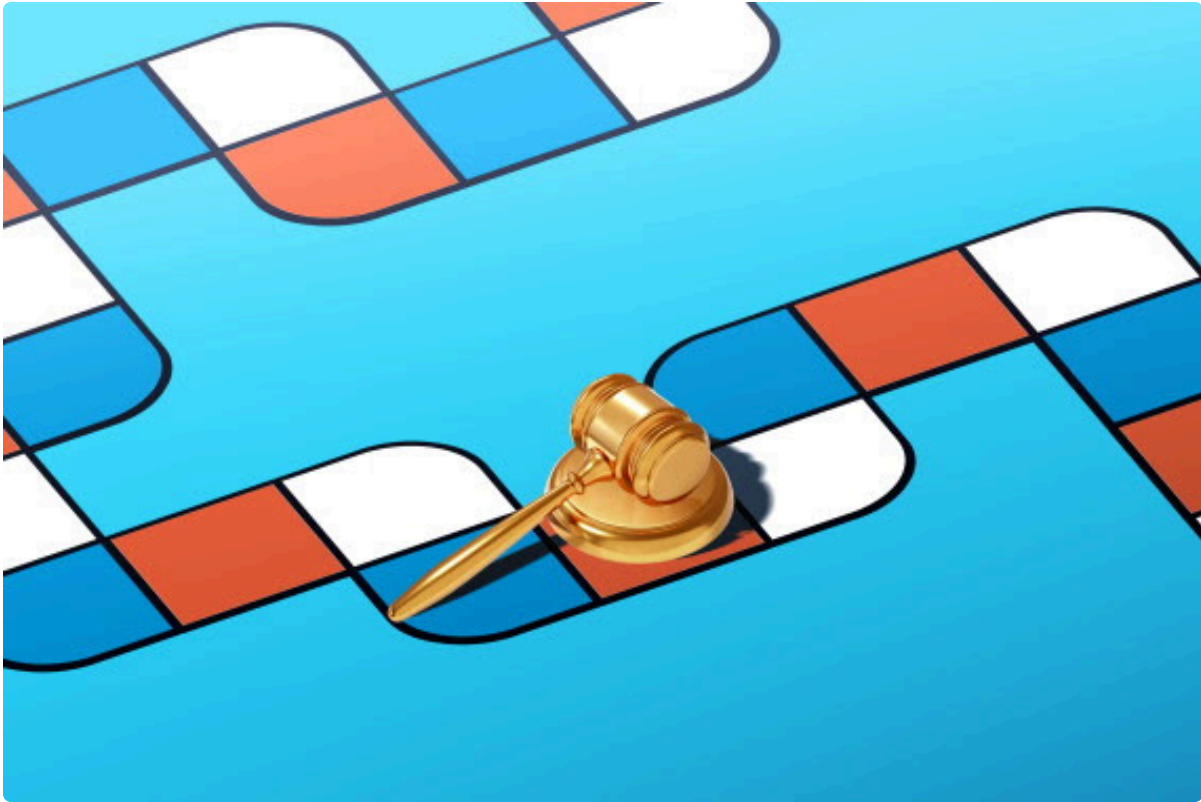
Latitudes



By Karin Fischer

In this week's Latitudes: A \$100K fee for OPT gets White House sign-off. Two-decade-old law on undocumented tuition struck down. Where attacks on higher education are happening worldwide. But first ...

COLLEGES WIN ROUND ONE



A judge's decision blocking a sweeping student-visa rule is a major victory for colleges and international students — but it's only the first skirmish of what's likely to be a lengthy fight.

Federal District Court Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV, of Massachusetts, issued a [preliminary injunction](#) late Monday, hours before the rule was scheduled to go into effect. In his order, Saylor wrote that the Trump administration had not considered alternatives or responded adequately to thousands of public comments about the rule, violating its own administrative procedures. He also questioned the connection between the rule and national security, its stated objective.

The [rule](#) would have capped the amount of time that international students could stay in the United States, a change from longstanding policy that allows students to remain in the country for as long as they continue their studies. It would limit students to no more than four years, regardless of their expected length of study — forcing doctoral students, undergraduates who need extra time to finish their degrees, and those seeking to work legally after graduation to apply for an extension.

The new process “introduces, at a minimum, a high degree of uncertainty into the educational process,” Saylor wrote. The regulation would also restrict students from changing their programs of study and from transferring between institutions, among other provisions.

Here's what else you should know about Saylor's decision:

He noted the absence of guidance about how the U.S. Department of Homeland Security will grant extensions and the lack of an appeals process.

He also wrote of his concern that government officials could deny extensions to students “whose viewpoints or research are disfavored by the officials making the decision — or, indeed, punish disfavored institutions.”

The preliminary injunction applies nationwide. Saylor said confining his decision to institutions that were part of the lawsuit brought by the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, and others could lead to “chaos and confusion.”

This is just the first round of the court fight. Saylor's decision delays implementation only, and the two sides will be back in court in two weeks, when the judge will begin the process of deciding whether to vacate the rule. In other words, the current decision, while favorable for students and colleges, does little to dispel the underlying uncertainty.

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A GLOBAL ASSAULT ON HIGHER ED

32

— *That's the number of attacks on students, scholars, and institutions worldwide in the past year.*

Scholars at Risk cataloged attacks on higher education in 59 countries or territories in its annual “Free to Think” report, including:

- Taliban officials arrested students at **Afghanistan's** Herat University for failing to comply with regulations on their appearance, such as wearing traditional caps and keeping a long beard.
- Police in **Honduras** fired tear gas and water cannons at students who were rallying against funding cuts to higher education.

- The University of Ibadan, in **Nigeria**, suspended a pair of students for four semesters for their peaceful protest of tuition costs.
- **Serbian** professors were allegedly denied contracts or promotions for supporting student demonstrations.
- Assailants attempted to assassinate a dean at Damascus University, in **Syria**.

For more information about attacks on academic freedom in countries around the globe, including the United States, check out the [full report](#).

ANOTHER UNDOCUMENTED-TUITION LAW FALLS

A federal judge has [struck down](#) a 22-year-old Kansas law that allowed some undocumented students to qualify for lower in-state tuition rates.

The state measure was challenged by the Trump administration, which argues that such state-level policies are a violation of federal immigration law. The U.S. Department of Justice has filed lawsuits against 25 states, saying that the policies give preferential treatment to immigrants over American citizens.

Last week, the government took the District of Columbia and [three states](#) — Arkansas, Hawaii, and Utah — to court.

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SURVEY EXTENDED

We want to hear from you!

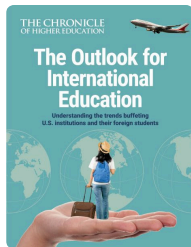
Help *The Chronicle* with planning for future online and in-person events related to international education. Which of these topics would you be most interested in for panel discussions and other programming? (Choose up to three.)

- The future of study abroad

- Transnational education and the post-mobility future of international education
- International-student mobility trends
- New and/or budget recruitment strategies for foreign students
- Visa, work, and other policy issues for international students
- International-student belonging and support
- Diversity and accessibility in study abroad
- Challenges facing undocumented students
- Immigrant students and higher education
- Other

We welcome your more specific ideas. Tell us your dream speakers. Let us know what topics we're missing. Thank you! [Fill out the survey here](#).

FROM THE CHRONICLE STORE



The Outlook for International Education

International students are a vital piece of the enrollment puzzle in American higher ed. But worrisome signs have emerged this year.

Order this new collection for a comprehensive look at the current state of global education.

AROUND THE GLOBE

The White House budget office has signed off a [proposed rule change](#) to increase fees to participate in optional practical training, the work program for international graduates of American colleges.

Newly introduced legislation would [cap](#) the number of foreign athletes who can play on college sports teams.

The number of scientists returning to [China](#) climbed from 31 in 2004 to 1,400 in 2022, with about half coming from the United States.

Academics in Iran could face [lengthy jail terms](#) if they have contact with overseas universities without the approval of intelligence officials.

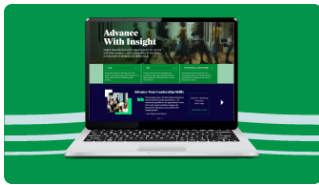
Here's what else I've been working on: How did the story Americans tell about higher education become shaped by — and often about — [elite institutions](#)? And if an exclusive club of colleges commands the public narrative, what gets left out of the telling?

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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