

# Illinois schools relieved after legal status of some international students restored

Syed, Zareen; Johnson, Rebecca; Stein, Carolyn . Syed, Zareen; Johnson, Rebecca; Stein, Carolyn.

[ProQuest document link](#)

---

## FULL TEXT

Academics across the country expressed a mix of relief and skepticism Friday after the Trump administration reinstated the legal status of more than 1,000 international students who had their records terminated in recent weeks.

The announcement came after scores of international students around the U.S. filed court challenges against the Trump administration crackdown, government lawyers said Friday.

Immigration officials said they are developing a new framework for reviewing and terminating visas for international students and agencies would not make additional changes or further revoke visas in the meantime, government lawyers said.

Tricia McLaughlin, assistant secretary for the Department of Homeland

Security, said in a statement to the Tribune late Friday afternoon that the department "did not reverse course on a single visa revocation," but instead restored SEVIS access for people who had not had their visas revoked.

In the last several weeks, more than 1,200 students nationwide, including several dozen across Illinois, suddenly lost their legal status or had visas revoked, leaving them at risk for deportation. Many said they had only minor infractions on their record or did not know why they were targeted. Some left the country while others have gone into hiding or stopped going to class.

Illinois universities including the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois Chicago, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Northwestern University said some of their students' visas were revoked, as a growing number of students' records in SEVIS, an online system maintained by the Department of Homeland Security, were being terminated.

After Friday's reversal, a Northwestern spokesperson said the university is "encouraged by this development and its impact on our current and former international students."

The unexpected sweeping reversals were met with relief from higher education experts, but many say it's unclear whether the situation has stabilized.

"I think the international students are really being whipsawed by this, but I do think there is some good news here that there is a glimmer of hope for the rule of law," said Jackie Stevens, a political science professor at Northwestern.

"There's relief for sure, but my own perspective on this is a little bit of caution that maybe they're going to cut bait now, but that doesn't mean that they're not going to circle back with a new tactic."

Stevens said the administration's response could be seen as a strategic move to avoid further legal complications, as federal judges have been pushing back against the administration.

Judges around the country had already issued orders temporarily restoring the students' records in dozens of lawsuits challenging the terminations. At least two federal lawsuits have been filed, in Georgia and New Hampshire, on behalf of large groups of students; meanwhile, a Chicago judge granted eight students a temporary restraining order Monday, reinstating their SEVIS status as early as Tuesday.

Edwin Yohnka, director of communications and public policy at the ACLU of Illinois, criticized the Trump administration's lack of foresight and sensitivity, noting the "rapid, ill-conceived nature" of policy changes.

"These students want nothing more than to get an education and contribute, whether it's here in the United States or

once returning to their home country. It's hard not to be concerned about whether or not some students will just give up in the process of the uncertainty," Yohnka said. "But for those who are able to get to graduation, or finish out whatever they need to do, I feel relief and hope that this is an opportunity to do that."

In the weeks and months to come, lawyers will likely start looking at the instances of students who recently self-deported, not knowing there would be a change in plans, Yohnka said.

"Hopefully there is some sort of potential for being able to fix that; no one knows anything for certain," he said, adding that it still isn't clear how many students left the country. "The whiplash of it all is just startling."

Chris Glass, a professor at Boston College who studies international enrollment and global student mobility, said he learned of the visa renewals when a student in his class Friday morning received a notification that the student's status had been restored.

"I think it continues to reinforce the notion among policymakers, current students and prospective students that the situation is unpredictable and it can turn on a dime," Glass said. "This just fits the administration's narrative of unpredictable moves."

Glass, an active member of the Comparative and International Education Society, said international students value the trust and transparency of American democracy, but that increasingly frayed contract hinges on whether or not the administration can be trustworthy and transparent about the errors it made.

Glass also wondered how many total students have been affected by the visa revocations, as there are varying numbers.

Some higher education experts have recorded nearly 1,800 students who had their visas revoked since March, but the American Association of Immigration Attorneys say their records show it's closer to 4,700 students, Glass said.

U. of C. previously said the federal government terminated the F-1 visas for three students and four recent graduates; Southern Illinois University Edwardsville said eight of its international students had their visas canceled: three enrolled undergraduates and five graduate students on optional practical training.

School officials at U. of I. could not confirm how many students were affected, but a high-ranking faculty member who didn't have the authority to share information publicly told the Tribune that 39 students, 33 of whom were currently enrolled, had their visas revoked.

Robin Kaler, a spokesperson for the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, said in a statement that it has been a "frightening and unsettling situation for our international community," adding that international diversity helps make the university "special."

She said the school will update students as it learns of changes to their status and will "continue to support them as they navigate this challenging time."

"International students and scholars offer unique perspectives, talents and experiences that enrich the academic experience, spark innovation, build fellowship and deepen mutual understanding for all students," Kaler said.

Louise Cainkar, a social and cultural science professor at Marquette University, said the level of confusion surrounding the student visas -- whether it's students tied to minor infractions or those who took part in political speech -- has been jarring.

"What stands out to me is the vulnerability and fear such actions promote among international students, and I might add prospective ones too," Cainkar said. "The lack of ICE coordination with the State Department, who issues foreign student visas, adds the element of intragovernmental chaos. When chaos and fear are combined, one gets a sense that anything goes."

Associated Press contributed.

CAPTION: Photo: Students use a crosswalk at Sixth and Green streets near the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus Feb. 14 in Champaign. John J. Kim/Chicago Tribune

CREDIT: By Zareen Syed, Rebecca Johnson and Carolyn Stein Chicago Tribune

## DETAILS

Subject:	Higher education; Foreign students; Passports & visas; National security; Attorneys; Restraining orders; Immigration; Colleges & universities
Business indexing term:	Subject: Attorneys Colleges & universities
Location:	Chicago Illinois; United States--US; Illinois
Company / organization:	Name: Department of Homeland Security; NAICS: 922120
Publication title:	Chicago Tribune; Chicago, Ill.
First page:	1
Publication year:	2025
Publication date:	Apr 26, 2025
Section:	News
Publisher:	Tribune Publishing Company, LLC
Place of publication:	Chicago, Ill.
Country of publication:	United States
Publication subject:	General Interest Periodicals--United States
ISSN:	10856706
Source type:	Newspaper
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News
ProQuest document ID:	3194885941
Document URL:	<a href="http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/chicagotribune/newspapers/illinois-schools-relieved-after-legal-status-some/docview/3194885941/sem-2?accountid=12861">http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/chicagotribune/newspapers/illinois-schools-relieved-after-legal-status-some/docview/3194885941/sem-2?accountid=12861</a>
Copyright:	Copyright Tribune Publishing Company, LLC Apr 26, 2025
Last updated:	2025-04-29
Database:	Chicago Tribune

## LINKS

[Linking Service](#)

---

Database copyright © 2025 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)