



Lawsuit: Columbia Tried to Defraud DHS on Student Visas

Most Americans don't know that more than one million foreign "students" attend American universities, and have the run not just of the campuses, but of the towns and cities that surround them. But more than that, most Americans surely don't know that leftist college administrators are in charge of keeping track of the foreigners for the Department of Homeland Security.

Those not-insignificant facts are revealed in a lawsuit filed against Columbia University, which fired a staffer, the lawsuit alleges, because she refused to participate in a visa-fraud scheme.



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Columbia University

That staffer is Yocasta Brens, who was in charge of keeping records on the foreigners. Brens wouldn't defraud DHS so Columbia sent her packing.

National Security Jeopardized?

Brens's title was Designated School Official, which means she kept records of the foreigners at Columbia. Those records go into a DHS database called the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, [explained John Feere](#) of the Center for Immigration Studies. A division within Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program, certifies the students.

But Columbia's top officials, Brens alleges, wanted her to lie.

"ICE's foreign student division relies heavily on DSOs to ensure information on foreign students is properly collected and reported," Feere reported:

This information includes, for example, a student's academic record, identity information like an address, and whether the student is maintaining a full course of study. DSOs are expected to be responsive and to alert ICE if a foreign student fails to adhere to the regulation or is suspended, dismissed, placed on probation, or if the student withdraws from school. These are critical roles created by SEVP's regulation and the central purpose is to ensure that DHS is able to keep tabs on foreign nationals who enter the country as students or exchange visitors. The list of requirements, filings, and data maintenance DSOs are expected to comply with is quite lengthy....

According to the lawsuit, Brens and her staff were directed ... to "process immigration documents on behalf of a group of potential students from South Africa without the necessary documentation, including evidence of funding and full-time engagement in a prescribed program, as required by federal regulations." Brens claims that Columbia's "Provost, Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Stephanie J. Rowley, accused Brens of being too 'inflexible' in the application of federal regulations." Brens claims that



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she and her staff “were frequently asked to ‘bend’ the rules in order to keep the enrollment of international students at a high level” and were directed to “certify that certain international students were enrolled full-time when they were, in fact, not full-time students” and “extend students’ immigration documents when they did not qualify based on federal requirements” and “ignore the lack of English language proficiency.”

Brens refused to participate in the visa fraud, and so Columbia pink-slipped her, the lawsuit alleges.

The Danger

The obvious danger? A wealthy foreign kid slips his leash and commits a terrorist act. One of the hijackers on 9/11, recall, was in the United States on a student visa. DHS created the tracking system after that terror attack, which left about 3,000 people dead.

“The foreign student tracking system, SEVIS, exists precisely because DHS needs to know if and when a foreign national fails to maintain full-time enrollment at a school,” [Feere continued](#):

When that happens, alarm bells go off at ICE because there’s an immediate uncertainty about the alien’s location and intent. If they entered the United States under the pretense of being a student but have something else in mind — whether it’s living and working illegally in the United States or engaging in a terrorist attack — federal law enforcement needs to figure it out quickly and take action.

Yet the truly frightening items in Feere’s report don’t just concern Columbia’s visa monkeyshines. More than 15,000 campuses are in the DHS program. The agency is watching 1.24 million foreign “students,” supposedly with help from the schools.

That aside, the number of foreign “students” is such that colleges have an obvious incentive to game the system to keep them in the country.

“As a whole, Columbia University ranks third in the nation for the most foreign students with 19,099, slightly behind only New York University (19,389) and Northeastern University (19,485),” [Feere reported](#). “Notably, just 20 schools host over 20 percent of the foreign student population, or nearly 250,000 people.”

Far be it for Americans to ask just why more than one million impossible-to-track foreigners, many of whom are Muslims, are running loose on college campuses and in nearby towns or cities.

In 2012, one such “student” was convicted of [threatening to](#) assassinate President Barack Hussein Obama. Another was sentenced to life in prison [for plotting](#) to murder former President George W. Bush.



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