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Will international students still have a spot at UW?

How Trump's executive orders against immigrants could impact them

By Anya Farwell The Daily

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Abigail Dahl

America is known for many things. Politics, greasy food, high taxes, and our higher education system. Many children aspire to attend college. It acts as a gateway into adulthood and gives people a chance to find their independence.

With newly elected President Donald Trump recently sworn into office, this dream of college seems to be at stake for many. In recent years we have seen a radical drop in college attendance, but with his executive orders targeting immigrants, can we also expect that from our international students in the coming years? This topic is up for debate.

UW has always catered to international students, and in some years, even admitted more foreign students than in-state applicants. During his first term as President, Trump paid little attention to international student affairs but seems to have dramatically shifted gears this term, already passing multiple executive orders aimed at immigration.

Many international students come to study in the United States to experience a different school system, and for some, a different way of life.

“It was a choice between the U.S. and India, the Indian education system is a little stricter,” a student who chose to remain anonymous due to safety concerns said.

In this case, this student chose UW for its flexibility and wide range of majors that weren’t an option back home.

“I thought studying in the U.S. would give me more options, and freedom of choice,” he said.

The subject of American politics is nothing new for international students; some even had to factor the probability of political election turnout into their college decisions last fall.

“I was briefly considering studying in the United Kingdom and Canada,” he said. “There was a dispute between the Canadian government and the Indian government ... that’s when I ruled out Canada,” he said.

The dispute between the two countries began with the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in 2023. Nijjar was a Sikh leader living in Canada after being labeled a terrorist by India. The tension between the two countries rose to exponential levels after he died, cutting off educational opportunities for many Indian students.

With Trump’s presidency in full swing, students are beginning to feel threatened, and their spot in college is at stake.

“It’s hard for international students to get visas,” another student choosing to remain anonymous due to safety concerns said. “A lot of people I know come on loans and student aid, and there’s always that fear of that aid getting cut back.”

The executive orders being put in place against immigration threaten to limit international students' visas, denying many the opportunity to stay in the United States and work after graduating college. Trump has also spoken about limiting financial aid, not just for international students, but for all students.

"You give so much to come here, and you do so much more, and study so much, and work hard, whereas someone else does half as much as you do, but can still be able to work here, and get the opportunity to stay here because they have the right," she said.

The present issues facing international students trace back to the constant tension that immigrants have faced in the United States both historically and in the modern day.

"It's the whole image of immigrants. You get looked down upon by some people who are really right-wing. They could think people are coming to take their jobs, but when people come in and do something that benefits them, no one says anything," she said.

Trump is branding his new presidency the "golden age of America," and yet seems to be milking old, worn slogans, like, "Don't judge a book by its cover." Student immigrants have to fight for their right to education, and Trump is unable to get past the word "immigrant."

"A lot of my friends make jokes about being deported, but it's honestly not that much of a joke," she said.

Closing out the interview, I asked both students if they were to apply to college currently and if they would still choose to come to the United States.

"Now I would, but maybe in a year's time it would change," she said.

"The current circumstances, yes, but it's a little unpredictable," he said.

Under the rule of President Trump, international students are beginning to reconsider their place at UW and in the U.S. as a whole. With Trump's executive orders looming — and already threatening international students' right to protest — the stakes are rising. It's all fun and games until someone gets deported, and then, reality hits.

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