

U.S. Halts New Student Visa Interviews to Expand Social Media Screening Under Trump Directive

Secretary of State Marco Rubio orders embassies to suspend F, M, and J visa interviews to allow implementation of new vetting rules. Though temporary, the pause has sparked concern among universities reliant on international students for enrollment.

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UVI's Orville E. Kean Campus in St. Thomas. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

The Trump administration has temporarily halted the scheduling of new visa interviews for international students seeking F, M, and J visas, according to a directive issued by Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The move, effective immediately, aims to facilitate the implementation of expanded social media vetting protocols for visa applicants. The pause does not impact existing

visa holders or interviews already scheduled, but it has sparked concerns about its potential effects on the U.S. higher education sector, which relies heavily on international students.

The decision was first reported by sources within the State Department and has been corroborated. The directive instructs U.S. embassies and consulates to suspend new interview appointments for these visa categories until further guidance is provided. The administration has emphasized that the pause is temporary, intended to allow for the integration of enhanced screening measures, particularly focused on applicants' social media activity. Details on the duration of the pause or the specifics of the new vetting process remain unclear, with officials promising additional information in the coming days.

International students contribute significantly to the U.S. economy, generating approximately \$44 billion annually through tuition, housing, and other expenditures, according to the Institute of International Education. The pause has raised alarms among university administrators and advocacy groups, who fear it could deter prospective students and disrupt enrollment for the upcoming academic year. "This sudden halt risks sending a chilling message to global talent considering the U.S. as a destination for education," said Dr. Sarah Mitchell, director of international programs at a leading U.S. university. "Uncertainty in the visa process could push students toward countries like Canada or Australia."

The Trump administration has prioritized immigration reform and border security, with President Trump repeatedly emphasizing the need for rigorous vetting of all entrants to the United States. The expanded social media screening is part of a broader effort to strengthen national security, building on policies introduced during Trump's first term. Proponents argue that the enhanced measures will help identify potential risks among visa applicants, while critics warn of delays and reduced accessibility for legitimate students.

The State Department has not yet released an official statement, but sources indicate that embassies are preparing for the new vetting requirements, which may involve analyzing applicants' online activity over several years. The pause does not affect other visa categories, such as tourist or work visas, nor does it impact students already enrolled in U.S. institutions or those with valid visas.

Higher education groups are calling for clarity and a swift resolution to minimize disruptions. "International students are a vital part of our academic and cultural fabric," said a spokesperson for NAFSA: Association of International Educators. "We urge the administration to provide a clear timeline and ensure the process remains fair and efficient."