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Universities brace for tougher controls on foreign students

by Jody A. Benjamin
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FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. - When he came to the United States on a student visa four years ago, Spanish citizen Jose Antonio Canas knew there were strings attached. He couldn't work off-campus. He had to pay top tuition of \$25,000 a year. And of course, once he had the degree, he'd have to leave.

No problem, said Canas, 22, now a senior at Florida International University hoping to graduate in December with a degree in international business.

But with student visas coming under intense scrutiny by legislators, Canas hopes it's not foreign students like him who suffer.

"I don't mind them making stronger rules on visas, as long as I still have a chance," said Canas, who lived in Africa and Central America before coming to Florida. "I'm more concerned about the backlash in society. I don't want that to burden me or anybody like me."

President Bush last week said the United States will tighten its policies for issuing student visas and begin to monitor foreign students more closely while they are in the United States. Officials have said that at least two of the terrorists who carried out the Sept. 11 attacks had overstayed their student visas.

A task force Bush ordered to come up with a plan has yet to be formed, let alone decide exactly what changes they will make to beef up student visa regulations.

But one focus is sure to be revving up an Internet-based data collection system that will help INS track foreign students by giving it student information updated on a quarterly basis.

"It's something that needs to happen," said Teresa de la Guardia, director of the University of Miami International Students and Scholars Service Office. "It will be a lot easier for that information to be in a database."

After a foreign student was implicated in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, Congress ordered the Immigration and Naturalization Service to establish the program, but implementation has been slow. Legislators gave INS until January 2003 to do it.

Last week, in the wake of the second and much more devastating attack on the World Trade Center, Congress slipped INS \$36.8 million in the anti-terrorism measure to make sure it happens, said INS spokesman Bill Strassberger.

The database will include the student's current address, visa classification, full- or part-time status, and whether school records indicate the student has been convicted of a crime.

Information collected in the database won't be public but will be accessible by the INS, the State and Education departments, and possibly other law enforcement, Strassberger said.

That's a big change from the current system. Now schools rarely report even basic enrollment information to the INS. "(It happens) usually only when they ask us about a particular student," de la Guardia said.

Under the new system, schools will be required to report student information to INS. Students will pay a one-time \$95 fee to INS to defray the costs.

At the University of Miami, 1,500 students, a little less than 10 percent of those on campus, are international students studying on temporary visas, de la Guardia said. The largest number hail from China, 130 students, and Colombia, 120 students. Both Florida International University and Florida Atlantic University report similar percentages.

Student advisers said the overall system could use tightening.

"The university is all out for diversity, and we do encourage it, but we do need some guidelines in place," said Ingrid Jones, acting director of the International Students and Scholar Services Department at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. "I think it's too loose now."

One weakness in the system, Jones said, is the common student practice of applying to several schools at once. Such applicants receive several copies of the I-20 form, the first step needed toward obtaining a valid visa.

"For those that don't enroll, we ask that the I-20 be returned, but of course we don't get them back," Jones said.

The new program will fix that by automatically canceling unused I-20s, Strassberger said.

Canas applied for his visa from Guatemala, where he was living. Normally, applicants stand in long lines around the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City to apply for visas. But Canas said a family connection helped him get his visa faster.

"It wasn't corruption or anything like that," he said. "If I didn't qualify for it they wouldn't have given it to me. That's just the way things are done in Guatemala."

Instructors use creative techniques to allow students to express themselves after attacks

by Christine Schweickert
Knight Ridder Newspapers

COLUMBIA, S.C. - Bruce Fryer used an exercise on the subjunctive mood to have his Spanish 211 students express their reactions to "the horrors of the day." Susan Haigler-Robles worked with dancers and musicians to show their feelings without words. And Pat Wolman explained to nutrition students how hunger could ignite terrorism.

The teachers are at different colleges - USC, Columbia College and Winthrop. But all have grabbed in the last six weeks what educators call "a teachable moment," the twin tragedies of the World Trade Center and Pentagon bombings, and the anthrax mail scare.

As a result, students have gained not just knowledge but an idea of how to become better thinkers and citizens.

"I've felt more personally informed because of what I've discussed in class," said Matthew Huyser, a freshman at Clemson University who has discussed the events in English and history classes. "I appreciate any class that is willing to alter its curriculum to accommodate world events and, in the process, offer an even more beneficial education."

Dan Berman is co-director of University 101, the Freshman Year Experience at USC, a series of seminar-like classes that teach freshmen how to acclimate themselves to college life.

University 101 cancelled events to allow students to immerse themselves in the news, and changed the nature of some classes to discuss the attacks.

"What I hear from our instructors and peer (student) leaders is that they have had numerous, powerful and insightful class discussions on the issues of the day," Berman said. "The ironic positive side to what we are dealing with is that the students who started college this year will grow up or mature faster than any (other) group in recent history."

Bridging the gap between past and current events is logical for those who teach history or government, perhaps. But the events of Sept. 11 and beyond have showed that almost every subject can be useful in teaching students to think.

In response to queries for this story, USC professors Ramona Lagos and Margit Resch told how Spanish-American and German literature on violence, war and racial politics suddenly had more relevance.

Allan Lockyer, who teaches the geography of the Middle East at Francis Marion University, said his students were paying "a lot more attention to the subject matter."

International affairs professor Chris Van Aller of Winthrop said that "this year, I didn't have to jump up and down quite as much to say 'This could happen to

you" when he taught about terrorism.

During her Sept. 12 marketing class at USC, Ellen Moore guided her students through the topic "learning and memory." She constructed a quick survey about the events "to learn students' feelings about the tragedy (and) show the significance of the event."

"As a result," she said, "the camaraderie seems to be greater among the students. Since the event, each lecture topic has in some way related to something about the attacks, the terrorists, the people - from lifestyles to attitudes to decision-making processes."

At Winthrop University, Wolman's senior seminar in human nutrition has explored the links between hunger and terrorism.

The students explored whether food drops were an effective way to allay hunger, since they dropped only one day's rations at a time over very rugged terrain. They discussed the possibility of introducing anthrax into America's food or water supply.

At Columbia College, history professor Tandy McConnell undertook an exercise that will change his teaching methods 20 years from now. He asked students to write journal entries on their reactions to the tragedies, plus "whom they called, who told them about it ... what they had for breakfast even."

He will use these "frozen moments" to teach about Sept. 11 in later classes "so that people not now alive will have an immediate ... picture of what we were doing and how we felt in Columbia on a day in September when, perhaps, everything changed."

Some professors have refused to stray far from their syllabi and received thank-yous for preserving normalcy or criticism for missing the moment.

"My plant form and functions (professor) felt the importance of the situation, and he just wanted us to talk," said Nikki Randle, a junior and biology major at USC. "On the other hand, I had a physiology professor, and he said, 'We have to talk about muscles today.'"

USC finance professor William Moore said his students expressed gratitude that he had "stayed the course."

But students also seem happy when professors stray.

Molly Dilbeck wasn't all that excited about Jim Bradley's economics classes before the tragedies. A junior and political science major at USC, she took the class because she had to.

But after Sept. 11, Bradley "related it (the attack) to economics, and gas prices. I've been a lot more informed and a lot less afraid."

Clemson freshman Kelly McCarty is in Pam Mack's History 122 class, which has discussed the effects of technology on society and world events. She has praised the discussions because they have "helped me become more informed as a student and as a citizen (and) helped in having better discussions with fellow students and family."

Need for safety creates hot new career tracks in security

by Michele Himmelberg
The Orange County Register

One of the few places workers might be able to find job security these days is in the field of security.

The terrorist attacks that shattered the nation's sense of safety on Sept. 11 appear to have made security a hot career, with heightened awareness of the need for physical and information security. A week after the terrorist attacks, recruiter Lisa Roberts could barely catch her breath between applicants lined up at a job fair booth for the Immigration and Naturalization Service. She talked to candidates about openings for immigration inspector and border patrol agents, officers charged with ensuring that only authorized people enter the country.

"We've had more interest today than we've had in the last six months," Roberts said. "People are saying, 'What can I do to protect my country?'"

That surge of patriotism, coupled with layoffs in other industries, drew Kelly Lewis, 23, to the INS table. She and two friends who work in sales in Orange County, Calif., liked the heroic aspect as well as the career opportunity.

"Security has to be a growth area," Lewis said. "There's a lot more awareness about the vulnerability of the country. That means security is going to be something important, something that has value."

In the days after the World Trade Center was destroyed and the Pentagon damaged, physical security increased everywhere, with extra precautions at airports, courthouses and office towers. Many companies reviewed safety plans and increased their security staffs.

Already, private security officers outnumber public law enforcement 2.5 to 1, according to the National Association of Security Companies, in Memphis, Tenn.

Ken Jacobs, president of JMG Security Systems in Fountain Valley, Calif., got so busy last month that he posted 10 job openings to help serve customers seeking alarm systems, surveillance equipment and access control systems.

"We're extremely busy, with lots of renewed interest in projects that were only under consideration before," Jacobs said. "And in light of everyone's mood today, we don't anticipate a slowdown."

American business also went into high alert to protect the lifeblood of their companies: information. As tragic as the attacks were, a widespread computer virus could be more financially devastating in terms of lost data and recovery time, said Bernie Cowans, director of security consulting for Spectria, the consulting arm of Rainbow Technologies.

"A concerted cyberterrorist attack could have far-reaching effects," he said. "Just look at how many hours it took to recover from the latest worm (NIMDA)."

Last year, the worldwide market for information security services grew to approximately \$6.7 billion, and it's projected to more than triple to \$21 billion by 2005, reports IDC, a technology intelligence company in Framingham, Mass.

The Computer Security Institute reports that 64 percent of survey respondents said they suffered financial losses due to computer breaches in the past 12 months.

Those kinds of figures are breeding more of a security mentality, which was only heightened by the events of Sept. 11. Looking ahead, Cowans said: "Companies realize security has to be somebody's job, otherwise it just won't get done."

SSP Solutions, Inc., in Irvine, Calif., helps companies protect their information in the cyberworld. Although SSP is not hiring now, Vice President Bob Gray expects the increased focus on security will help him create jobs, from software engineers to specialists in biometrics, a science that combines biology and data analysis. Gray thinks the public will be more willing to embrace technologies once cast off as invasive.

With that in mind, here are nine security-related jobs that might ease the rising unemployment rate:

1. Chief security officer: Many firms added a CIO (chief information officer) or CLO (chief learning officer) in the '90s, but the hot new title this decade could be CSO, chief security officer. While "CSO" might be used only at big corporations, the duties will belong to someone in almost every company: Create a comprehensive security policy, implement it and enforce it.

2. Data security: In the technology arena, service providers help companies evaluate the security of their information systems data, e-mail, Web sites, etc. They also are responsible for virus detection. Job titles include data security manager, systems engineer and information security analyst. Skills required usually include knowledge of hardware platforms; good organization and an understanding of the industry's business and legal issues. Gray, with SSP, says most of his hires don't have a security background.

Instead, they're good computer programmers, self-starters and imaginative problem-solvers. "It's more of an attitude I look for; someone who's willing to dig in and create better ways of doing things," Gray said. "In evolving technologies, you don't always have nice, neat specifications to work from."

Another job with growth potential is security technical consultant, someone who can help companies select the products they need to secure their information.

Technical training and related experience will provide an edge over other candidates in data security, said Amy Kessler, vice president for North American operations at GROUP Software, an e-mail and content security company in Boston. Salaries for security professionals aver-

aged \$65,000 in 2000, reports the SANS Institute, an association for information security professionals.

3. Linguist: The National Security Agency, in Fort Meade, Md., advertises for a linguist specialist in Asian, Middle Eastern and Slavic languages. It also looks for cryptologists, someone who can write and decipher code.

The linguist ad, at www.intelligencecareers.com gives this pitch: "You will be involved in activities that focus on the expert translation, transcription, reporting, and analysis of materials of national concern. You may also be called upon to further your understanding of a culture in which a certain language is spoken, expanding your horizons more than a comparable career in business, commerce, or academia normally would. In short, your language skills will make a world of difference here."

4. National security specialist: This broad category includes FBI agents, surveillance experts and foreign service workers. The latest push has been to develop more scientists in this field.

In February, the U.S. Commission on National Security in the 21st Century proposed education grants for math and hard science majors who could help develop defense technologies. Scholarships also were proposed for social science, humanities and foreign language students to counter the growing rate of attrition among foreign service workers.

The commission recommended a national campaign to "reinvigorate and enhance the prestige of service to the nation," noting that foreign service no longer attracts or retains the quality of people needed "to meet the diplomatic challenges of the 21st century."

5. Background investigator: HireRight, an Irvine company that helps employers screen potential workers, has seen increased demand for its background checks. The research typically includes criminal record searches, employment verification, Department of Motor Vehicle records and personal reference checking. Lately, emphasis has been placed on professional licenses, such as in medicine, said Kim Gower, a spokeswoman for HireRight. Researchers need to be detailed, organized and able to follow strict quality-control measures. CISCO systems, which uses HireRight's services, is implementing an international system, said Peggy Donatelli, program manager for CISCO's worldwide background investigations.

"We had a great surge of interest in our background program from managers around the country (after Sept. 11)," Donatelli said. "People are taking security issues a lot more seriously."

6. Private security officer: Industry groups estimate that between 1 million and 2 million security officers work for private companies that contract them out to office buildings, airports, conference centers, etc.

These officers patrol the premises, safeguard entry to

an area, write reports on security incidents and assist in emergency situations. Most are unarmed (see www.asisonline.org). In California, officers hired by security agencies must be licensed, said Tom Devlin, a spokesman for Allied Security in Orange. Allied already has begun training officers to meet its increased demand.

At Allied, candidates who pass the background check are provided with training and assistance in acquiring their state guard card. Starting pay is \$9 to \$10 an hour, plus benefits and advancement opportunities.

Some companies hire their own security staff. Disneyland, for example, is hiring officers. They must pass a background check, but they are not state-licensed, a spokeswoman said. They're expected to have strong communication skills and be able to stay on their feet for long periods of time.

In the aftermath of Sept. 11, industry leaders have called for better training and higher pay for private security officers. Their median annual salary in 1998 was \$16,240, according to U.S. Department of Labor.

7. Police officer/sheriff: Most law enforcement agencies have been in a hiring mode for some time. They get many applicants but few who can pass the stringent application process that includes a written test, a physical agility test and thorough background check. Those who make it can start at \$25,000 to \$49,000 a year in California. Most agencies have Web sites with application information.

8. INS agents: The INS is hiring border patrol agents in the Southwest and immigration inspectors in San Diego and San Francisco. The application process begins by registering for a written test.

Immigration inspectors prevent ineligible persons from entering the country at airports, seaports and land ports. Requirements include the following: enjoy meeting people from around the world, have an analytical mind and keen sense of detail. You must be a U.S. citizen.

Salary ranges from \$24,000 to \$36,000. You can apply online at www.usajobs.opm.gov.

9. Security alarm and access technicians: Installation technicians and trainers, service technicians, fire testers and sales agents are among the vacancies listed at JMG Security (www.jmgsecurity.com) in Fountain Valley, one of several security alarm companies experiencing a boom in business.

Installation and service technicians need an aptitude for electronics and a willingness to learn, with most training done on the job. Duties include installing electronic systems in homes and businesses, with a starting pay rate of about \$10 an hour. More advanced work includes closed-circuit television, camera surveillance in larger buildings, card access and evacuation systems.