



## **Whose University Is it Anyway?**

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You may not have paid much attention to Leslie Church's January 30, 2008 article, "Have skills, will travel: foreign students hope for work in the United States." You should have. It lays out many of the reasons why your investment of energy, time, and money in obtaining a SUNYAB degree will (in most cases) show a very poor return on investment (ROI) as a consequence of employer abuse of the H-1B Visa program. Your investment may even yield a negative ROI. Mine did. In order to obtain employment, I hid the fact that I earned a Ph.D. - otherwise I would be informed that I was "overqualified." That is employer-speak for thinly - disguised age discrimination, among other things.

My perspective regarding this issue is relevant. My bachelor's was from a top-notch science and engineering school in California, Harvey Mudd College. I worked hard to earn a Ph.D. in biophysics at SUNYAB between 1973 and 1984. I was unable to pursue a career in radiation biophysics. Now aged 56, I have had to face the prospect of homelessness more than once because employers prefer "fresh (inexpensive) young blood" - now mostly via the controversial 1990 H-1B visa program. The H-1B Visa gave to many employers the same advantage (special handling) that colleges and universities such as SUNYAB obtained via the obscure 1976 "Eilberg Amendment."

What does special handling mean? Simply that an employer sets the wages and working conditions for the highly-skilled labor that they obtain via work visa programs such as H-1B. The highly skilled immigrant responds to the prospective reward of U.S. citizenship (or no prosecution for overstaying their visa) for themselves and their extended family by their willingness to work for very low wages in most cases. There is also the slight chance that the immigrant may face deportation for working while "out of status." However, in response to employer - interest lobbying, U.S. immigration laws are rarely enforced. Lest you think that visa overstaying is an isolated phenomenon, one of the most recent INS surveys, published in 1998, showed that about half of all foreign nationals that were euphemistically "out of status" had overstayed their student, work, or tourist visa. Coupling that information with a recent estimate that there are currently 38 million people in the U.S. who are "out of status" yields a large population in competition for the "white collar" jobs that SUNYAB trains us for.

Professor Norm Matloff of UC Davis has studied the H-1B wage depression

phenomenon extensively. Googling on "H-1B" and Matloff yield over 1,000 links. Start with the topmost link. You will learn that the H-1B is typically paid greater than 20% less than a comparably-qualified U.S. citizen, who has the right of employment free agency. The "remarkable loyalty" of the H-1B visa holder is praised by some of the sources that Matloff cites. This is a consequence of the "carrots and sticks" above that were designed by the employer interests who effectively wrote most of the H-1B visa law. First-hand experience has also taught me that the purported wage protections for U.S. citizens are loophole-ridden.

You may not be shocked to also learn that this diminution of U.S. high-skilled salary scales was planned for in the late 1980s by a U.S. government agency, the National Science Foundation (NSF.) A MIT mathematician and legal researcher, Eric Weinstein unearthed this information and has publicized it. Google on the two acronyms NSF and NBER and "Weinstein." The first reference is a paper with a title that begins "How and Why Government..." Quoting from the NSF policy analysts, "A growing influx of foreign PhD's into U.S. labor markets will hold down the level of PhD salaries to the extent that foreign students are attracted to U.S. doctoral programs as a way of immigrating to the U.S.. A related point is that for this group the PhD salary premium is much higher [than it is for Americans], because it is based on BS-level pay in students' home nations versus PhD-level pay in the U.S.. "

If you have any doubt about regarding the effectiveness of this policy, note a "postdoc" is typically paid less than the manager of a fast food restaurant, who may only have a high school education. Use the link to the disclosure site H1b.info, [http://h1b.info/lca\\_search.php](http://h1b.info/lca_search.php) Use "Research Foundation of SUNY Buffalo" for the employer, 2006 for the year, and you will learn that SUNYAB hired six "postdocs" that year, each for a meager salary of about \$30K.

Let's return to the title of this article. See...  
<http://www.suny.edu/files/sunynewsfiles/pdf/BudgetBook0809.pdf>

The 2008-09 SUNY Budget request establishes on Table 1, Page 10 that the SUNY 2007-08 all funds budget request total was \$10.08 billion. The report takes 44 pages to request more for 2008-09 without a prominent total. Most of these funds are paid by taxpayers, so I hold that the taxpayers should have significant input into how those funds are spent. Should funds be spent to facilitate employment age discrimination against U.S. citizens? Should U.S.citizens have some protection from the economic migration desires of ~ 6 billion people?

In summary, here's the concluding paragraph of one of my published articles from 2005...

<http://www.thesocialcontract.com/pdf/fifteen-three/xv-3-207.pdf>

Caltech Vice Provost David Goodstein summarized the problem in a 1993 American Scholar article: "The American taxpayer (both state and federal) is supporting extremely

expensive research universities whose main educational purpose is to train students from abroad. When these students finish their educations, they either stay here, taking relatively high-paying jobs that could have gone to Americans, or they go home, taking our knowledge and our technology with them. Congress and the public doesn't seem to have noticed that, while largely ignoring our own students, we are putting our money and our best talent into training our economic competitors. Just wait until this one hits the fan.

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<http://spectrum.buffalo.edu/article.php?id=35243>

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