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21 Defendants Charged with Fraudulently Enabling Hundreds of Foreign Nationals to Remain in the United States Through Fake 'Pay to Stay' New Jersey College

"College" Created as Part of Homeland Security Investigations Sting Operation

Twenty-one brokers, recruiters and employers from across the United States who allegedly conspired with more than 1,000 foreign nationals to fraudulently maintain student visas and obtain foreign worker visas through a "pay to stay" New Jersey college were arrested this morning by federal agents, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman for the District of New Jersey announced.

The defendants (*see chart below*) were arrested in New Jersey and Washington by special agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and charged in 14 complaints with conspiracy to commit visa fraud, conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit and other offenses. All the defendants, with the exception of Yanjun Lin aka Aimee Lin, 25, of Flushing, New York, will appear today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Steven C. Mannion of the District of New Jersey in Newark, New Jersey, federal court. Lin will appear before U.S. Magistrate Judge Karen L. Strombom in the Western District of Washington federal court.

"'Pay to Stay' schemes not only damage our perception of legitimate student and foreign worker visa programs, they also pose a very real threat to national security," U.S. Attorney Fishman said. "Today's arrests, which were made possible by the great undercover work of our law enforcement partners, stopped 21 brokers, recruiters and employers across multiple states who recklessly exploited our immigration system for financial gain."

"While the United States fully supports international education, we will vigorously investigate those who seek to exploit the U.S. immigration system," said Director Sarah R. Saldaña for ICE. "As a result of this operation, HSI special agents have successfully identified and closed a gap in the student visa system and have arrested 21 individuals alleged to be amongst the system's most egregious violators."

"Individuals engaged in schemes that would undermine the remarkable educational opportunities afforded to international students represent an affront to those who play by the rules," said Special Agent in Charge Terence S. Opiola for ICE Homeland Security Investigations. "These unscrupulous individuals undermine the integrity of the immigration system. Our special agents are committed to addressing, identifying fraud in order to better protect the system as a whole."

According to the complaints unsealed today and statements made in court:

The defendants, many of whom operated recruiting companies for purported international students, were arrested for their involvement in an alleged scheme to enroll foreign nationals as students in the University of Northern New Jersey, a purported for-profit college located in Cranford, New Jersey (UNNJ). Unbeknownst to

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the defendants and the foreign nationals they conspired with, however, the UNNJ was created in September 2013 by HSI federal agents.

Through the UNNJ, undercover HSI agents investigated criminal activities associated with the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), including, but not limited to, student visa fraud and the harboring of aliens for profit. The UNNJ was not staffed with instructors or educators, had no curriculum and conducted no actual classes or education activities. The UNNJ operated solely as a storefront location with small offices staffed by federal agents posing as school administrators.

UNNJ represented itself as a school that, among other things, was authorized to issue a document known as a "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status - for Academic and Language Students," commonly referred to as a Form I-20. This document, which certifies that a foreign national has been accepted to a school and would be a full-time student, typically enables legitimate foreign students to obtain an F-1 student visa. The F-1 student visa allows a foreign student to enter and/or remain in the United States while the student makes normal progress toward the completion of a full course of study in an SEVP accredited institution.

During the investigation, HSI special agents identified hundreds of foreign nationals, primarily from China and India, who previously entered the U.S. on F-1 non-immigrant student visas to attend other SEVP- accredited schools. Through various recruiting companies and business entities located in New Jersey, California, Illinois, New York and Virginia, the defendants then enabled approximately 1,076 of these foreign individuals – all of whom were willing participants in the scheme – to fraudulently maintain their nonimmigrant status in the U.S. on the false pretense that they continued to participate in full courses of study at the UNNJ.

Acting as recruiters, the defendants solicited the involvement of UNNJ administrators to participate in the scheme. During the course of their dealings with undercover agents, the defendants fully acknowledged that none of their foreign national clients would attend any actual courses, earn actual credits, or make academic progress toward an actual degree in a particular field of study. Rather, the defendants facilitated the enrollment of their foreign national clients in UNNJ to fraudulently maintain student visa status, in exchange for kickbacks, or "commissions." The defendants also facilitated the creation of hundreds of false student records, including transcripts, attendance records and diplomas, which were purchased by their foreign national conspirators for the purpose of deceiving immigration authorities.

In other instances, the defendants used UNNJ to fraudulently obtain work authorization and work visas for hundreds of their clients. By obtaining this authorization, a number of defendants were able to outsource their foreign national clients as full-time employees with numerous U.S.-based corporations, also in exchange for commission fees. Other defendants devised phony IT projects that were purportedly to occur at the school. These defendants then created and caused to be created false contracts, employment verification letters, transcripts and other documents. The defendants then paid the undercover agents thousands of dollars to put the school's letterhead on the sham documents, to sign the documents as school administrators and to otherwise go along with the scheme.

All of these bogus documents created the illusion that prospective foreign workers would be working at the school in some IT capacity or project. The defendants then used these fictitious documents fraudulently to obtain labor certifications issued by the U.S. Secretary of Labor and then ultimately to petition the U.S. government to obtain H1-B visas for non-immigrants. These fictitious documents were then submitted to the U.S. Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS). In the vast majority of circumstances, the foreign worker visas were not issued because USCIS was advised of the ongoing undercover operation.

In addition, starting today, HSI Newark is coordinating with the ICE Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit (CTCEU) and the SEVP to terminate the nonimmigrant student status for the foreign nationals associated with UNNJ, and if applicable, administratively arrest and place them into removal proceedings.

The chart below outlines the charges for each defendant. The charges of conspiracy to commit visa fraud and making a false statement each carry a maximum potential penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The charges of conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit and H1-B Visa fraud each carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and \$250,000 fine.

The charges and allegations contained in the complaints are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, under the leadership of Director Saldaña; HSI Newark, under the leadership of Special Agent in Charge Opiola; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit, under the leadership of Unit Chief Robert Soria; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Fraud Detection and National Security Section, under the leadership of Associate Director Matthew Emrich; the Student and Exchange Visitor Program, under the leadership of Deputy Assistant Director Louis M. Farrell; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Vermont Service Center, Security Fraud Division, under the leadership of Associate Center Director Bradley J. Brouillette; U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Fraud Prevention Programs, under the leadership of Director Josh Glazeroff; and the FBI, Joint Terrorism Task Force, under the leadership of Timothy Gallagher in Newark, for their contributions to the investigation.

He also thanked the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), under the leadership of Executive Director Michale S. McComis, and the New Jersey Office of Higher Education, under the leadership of Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle R. Hendricks, for their assistance. In addition, U.S. Attorney Fishman thanked the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission and the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, as well as the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Central District of California, Eastern District of New York, Eastern District of Virginia, Southern District of New York, Central District of Illinois, Peoria Division, and the Northern District of Georgia for their help.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Dennis C. Carletta of the U.S. Attorney's Office National Security Unit and Sarah Devlin of the Office's Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Unit.

Defendant Name	Age	Residence	Charges
Jun Shen aka Jeanette Shen	32	Levittown, New York	– Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Jiaming Wang aka Celine Wang,	34	Los Angeles, California	– Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Philip Junlin Li	33	Los Angeles, California	– Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Zitong Wen aka Kate Wen	27	Rowland Heights, California	– Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit

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Chaun Kit Yuen aka Alvin Yuen	24	Rowland Heights, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Ting Zue aka Tiffany Xue	28	Flushing, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
YanJun Lin aka Aimee Lin	25	Flushing, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Zheng Zhang aka Vicky Zhang	26	New York, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Xue Yong Liu aka Jack Liu	29	New York, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit

Minglu Li aka Vivian Lee	36	Los Angeles, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Jason Li aka Jason Liu aka Fen Lee	43	Flushing, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Tajesh Kodali	44	Edison, New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Jyoti Patel	34	Franklin Park, New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit

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Shahjadi M. Parvin aka Sarah Patel	54	Hackensack, New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Narendra Singh Plaha	44	Hillsborough, New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Sanjeev Sukhija	35	North Brunswick, New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Harpreet Sachdeva	26	Somerset, New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Avinash Shankar	35	Bloomington, Illinois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Karthik Nimmala	32	Smyrna, Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conspiracy to commit visa fraud – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Govardhan Dyavarashetty aka Vardhan Shetty	35	Avenel, New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – H1-B Visa fraud – False statements – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit
Syed Qasim Abbas aka Qasim Reza aka Nayyer	41	Brooklyn, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – H1-B Visa fraud – False statements – Conspiracy to harbor aliens for profit

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