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Immigration

Fake Companies Exploit F-1 Student Visa Program

Legal Update

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By Immigration Group

This article was prepared with the assistance of ABIL, the Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers, of which Loan Huynh, Fredrikson Immigration Department Chair, is a member.

NBC found that 14 “suspicious” companies employed more than 5,500 foreign students through the Optional Practical Training program.

A new investigation by NBC News/NBC Bay Area found that fake companies providing false employment verifications have been exploiting the F-1 student visa program, which allows students to stay in the United States after they graduate to obtain practical work experience. One defendant reportedly admitted to providing false employment records for nearly 2,700 students, for example.

NBC said its efforts to contact officers at 14 “suspicious” companies “were met with a series of dead-end business addresses and disconnected phone numbers. Emails, phone calls and social media messages went unanswered by all but two companies. In those two instances, an officer reached by phone verified their identity but declined to discuss their company.” NBC noted that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement records showed that those 14 companies employed more than 5,500 foreign students through the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program in 2017.

The Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers cautions that F-1 foreign students should seek employment with legitimate companies that provide employment directly related to a student’s major area of study. Obtaining false employment verification will have a serious impact on the student’s ability to maintain F-1 status and will also adversely impact the student’s eligibility for future immigration benefits.