


The Slowly Unraveling H-1B Scandal at Wright State University in Ohio

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The provost at Wright State University, near Dayton, Ohio, has lost his job as a result of an internal investigation into the institution's use of the H-1B program; a second official has been demoted and may lose his tenured teaching status; and a third has been fired.

It sounds very much like the university found out about the problems before DHS did, but that's a widespread pattern. An [AP story](#) indicates that a federal investigation is ongoing, but did not name the agency doing it.

Wright State is a middle-sized (17,000 students, \$310 million a year) state-run institution with some research facilities. It is now an independent entity, but it used to be a campus of Ohio State and Miami University. It is near the big Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and is a few miles from the congressional district of Speaker Boehner.

What happened to cause the actions against the three? It must have been significant because such institutions are loath to fire top officials.

The university's president, David Hopkins, said in a [not-very-forthcoming statement](#) that:

[T]his past spring we were presented with credible evidence that somewhere between two and five years ago not every H-1B employee sponsored by the university was actually working for the university.

According to [MyVisaJobs.com](#), Wright State filed 121 labor condition applications for H-1Bs in the years 2011-2015. Employers generally file two or three LCAs for every alien actually hired.

Wright State officials, like similarly placed executives at other universities, have the potential to access a major flow of illicit money by manipulating foreign worker programs, but this either rarely happens or it is rarely reported in the non-profit education sector. These illicit opportunities are

there because universities have open access to the H-1B program and can secure as many workers as they want, while corporations have to live within the (too generous) national ceiling of 85,000 new H-1Bs a year.

A university can — as even mighty Microsoft cannot — say to a would-be H-1B worker: "Come and join us, we are *absolutely certain* that our application will not be thwarted by a numerical ceiling."

I have been paying attention to such issues for years, but have heard of only one instance in which a "university" was using its status to bring large numbers of H-1Bs into the country who did not, in fact, work for the institution or affiliated entities. In that instance, the entity said it would employ the H-1Bs as nursing professors, but they actually worked as nurses in hospitals and nursing homes and had to pay substantial bribes to those who arranged their visas. (The exploitation of F-1 students, and the government, by for-profit visa mills is another story.)

I used quotation marks above because the schemers in Colorado invented an educational institution out of whole cloth — Adam University — for their devious purposes and fooled the feds for years.

Just what happened at Wright State, I do not know. It may be that the three officials simply used the H-1B system to bring in friends or relatives and no money changed hands. (Two of the three have subcontinent names.) Or it could be a substantial operation along the lines of Adam University, or something in between.

The former provost, Sundram Narayanan, who is currently the subject of an effort by the university to remove him from his tenured professorship, took a huge risk in this venture; he was paid at the rate of \$352,642 a year in 2013 according to university records.

Local reporters, not surprisingly, were unaware of the university's powers in the H-1B program and described it along predictable lines: "The main point of the H-1B visa is to allow highly trained foreign employees the opportunity to work for a specific company in the United States for a few years," reported WDTN.

