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Investigators Seek, and Colleges Provide, Information on Students

BY RON SOUTHWICK

ABOUT 200 COLLEGES have turned over information about their foreign students to federal and local authorities investigating last month's terrorist attacks, according to a nationwide survey.

Officials at law-enforcement agencies asked nearly half of those institutions to disclose private information, including financial records, prompting concern about potential abuses of students' rights.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has contacted 144 institutions since the terrorist incidents in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, according to a survey being compiled by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. The survey, which is continuing, indicates that the Immigration and Naturalization Service has contacted 56 colleges. Some institutions were contacted by both agencies, and some only by local police departments.

'FULLY COOPERATIVE'

Colleges are volunteering information freely. Of the institutions disclosing information, only 22 requests for information were accompanied by subpoenas.

"The inescapable conclusion is that higher education has been fully cooperative with authorities," said Barmak Nassirian, associate executive director of the registrars' group.

Federal law normally bars colleges from releasing students' personal information without obtaining their consent. However, the law does allow exemptions

information about such things as bank accounts and credit cards.

Only eight colleges said they did not provide information, Mr. Nassirian said, but seven of those institutions did not have any records to provide. Only one institution refused outright to turn over private records, he said.

Advocates for students are wondering if institutions are be-

coming too accommodating. The United States Student Association is worried that the government could infringe on privacy rights, and that it has not acted sufficiently to make sure there are no abuses of private information.

At least one of the suspected hijackers involved in the terrorist attacks had entered the country on a student visa, prompting discussion about reviewing the procedures through which foreign students can enter the country.

MORE TO COME?

Colleges are concerned that proposed federal antiterrorist legislation now in Congress would give government officials too much power to compel colleges to turn over student records.

So far, 1,175 college and university officials have responded to the survey, and responses are still arriving, Mr. Nassirian said.

Legal agencies have asked 34 institutions for records of all students—foreign and American—who are enrolled in specific academic programs, usually in aviation, Mr. Nassirian said.

"I think that students throughout the country are very concerned. We're seeing an increased stripping of civil liberties."

during a "health or safety emergency." The survey indicates that colleges are sharing their records, and they are usually not notifying students when doing so.

Officials at 169 institutions said they did not tell students if they released their information. The survey indicated that 144 institutions were asked to provide publicly available information, such as names and addresses.

Mr. Nassirian said that officials at 97 colleges indicated that they were asked to disclose private information, including the courses students were taking, their grades, and financial infor-

ation about such things as bank accounts and credit cards.

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