

INS tracking of students is due in July

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Body

A new system that will allow the Immigration and Naturalization Service to **track** an estimated one million foreign **students** will be up and running in the next several months, Justice Department sources said yesterday.

The start-up of the Internet-based system is seen by officials as a significant step toward monitoring foreign **students** and beefing up the country's antiterror safeguards.

The system is scheduled to be operational by **July** 1.

The system is designed to provide up-to-date computerized information on nonimmigrant foreign **students**, such as name changes and new dropouts, an official said. Each school will have 24 hours to input changes.

Schools now maintain paper records on foreign **students**; the records are not kept in a central location and are not provided to the INS unless the agency requests them.

"It is the single best step the federal government can take to keep closer tabs on international **students** studying in the United States," said Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, a trade association that represents 1,800 public and private colleges and universities.

A 1996 immigration-reform law required the INS to upgrade the system by which it keeps **track** of the foreign **students** studying in the United States at any time. The system must be in place by January.

Pressure to get the system up and running has increased since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. Hani Hanjour, one of the 19 hijackers, used a **student** visa to enter the United States, saying he wanted to study English. He never showed up for class.

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