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**Abstract**

In an increasing number of nations, foreign education providers are becoming part of the educational landscape. This aspect of cross-border higher education raises many questions about how such activities are regulated, particularly the role of the importing and exporting governments. Drawing on a principal-agent framework, this study uses the United States, which is an amalgamation of more than 50 independent regulatory systems, to analyze how governments regulate the importing and exporting of public colleges and universities. The analysis reveals that state regulations primarily focus on issues pertaining to the approval process of expansion, mandating administrative requirements, providing comparable programs, and guarding against unnecessary competition; whereas there is limited focus on quality. Further, states have more extensive regulations for importing activities than exporting activities. These findings can help inform scholars and policymakers interested in multinational cross-border educational activities and the study serves as a prototype for other investigations of cross-border educational regulations. (HRK / Abstract

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