

Russia Deports U.S. College Professor After Bard Hit With ‘Undesirable’ Label – Reports

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Michael Freese had been a coordinator for Bard’s exchange program with St. Petersburg State University's Smolny College. spbu.ru; NSmirnova (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Russia has deported an American professor at a prestigious St. Petersburg university who was associated with a U.S. college that was blacklisted by the authorities earlier this year, media [reported](#) Monday.

Michael Freese, a professor in St. Petersburg State University's Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty, was banned from returning to Russia until 2026, according to the St. Petersburg-based Fontanka.ru news website.

It added that Russia suspects Freese of cooperating with an “undesirable” organization.

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[Exchange](#)

The Prosecutor General's Office in June labeled Bard College, which had partnered with St. Petersburg State University since 1997 and had a dual-degree program with its Smolny College since 2011, an "undesirable" organization. St. Petersburg State University swiftly terminated its agreements with Bard and wiped information from its website about the partnership between the two.

The university also removed Freese's profile from the website of its Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty page.

According to the university's faculty Telegram channel Lupa i Pupa, Freese earned a postgraduate degree from Smolny in 2011, after which he stayed on as a professor and a coordinator for Bard's exchange program.

Citing fellow professors, it [reported](#) that authorities had detained Freese on his way to the university and annulled his contract and visa.

"We are as shocked as Smolny's students" by Freese's arrest and deportation, Lupa i Pupa said Monday.

Smolny College's troubles began in March, as work began on reorganizing the college into a separate university with plans to expand its enrollment and partnership with Bard.

That same month, Russia's NGO Coordinating Council asked the Prosecutor General's Office to declare the new university "undesirable," accusing it of being "part of a global network of controlled educational institutions to educate young people in a pro-Western way, form a protest electorate and inculcate a hostile ideology toward their country."

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