

Just over two months ago, I wrote to the campus regarding perceived threats to our DACA and other immigrant students. I concluded that note with a broader message:

"We want to be clear that all of our students -- whether citizens or not, whether born in the U.S. or not, whether recognized as immigrants or not -- are a cherished part of our community, and we will always work to assure their ability to complete their studies and pursue their dreams."

With the action of the Trump administration on Friday instituting a ban on travelers and immigrants from seven countries -- Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen -- our commitment to *all* of our students is being tested. Although my prior message primarily concerned immigrants, I tried to make it clear that all of our students, from wherever they come and whatever their citizen or immigrant status, deserve our support when it comes to being able to pursue their education at Rice. Our commitment equally extends to faculty, researchers and staff in support of their ability to do their work and research at Rice and around the globe.

Much is uncertain as executive agencies, the courts and others sort out the details and implications of this action, but I write today to expand and clarify our commitment to our students, faculty and staff. Of most immediate concern are our students from Iran, the only country on the list from which we currently have enrolled students. Each year I have had the opportunity to meet many of these students. They are a wonderful part of our community, and we would be much the poorer without them. But given the breadth of the order and the confusion and uncertainty around it, many others are being put at risk, potentially including immigrants from all seven countries who are permanent residents of the United States or hold dual citizenship with one of those countries. And it is understandable that our many Muslim students may feel particularly at risk in light of these actions.

As a university, we will take whatever action we can to advocate for a change in this presidential directive so that our students, and future students, can continue to benefit from an outstanding education at Rice, and so our faculty, researchers and staff can travel freely. As recognized by our celebration of the history of Asians at Rice on Friday, our very first class at Rice included an immigrant student. And we have also had immigrant faculty members from the beginning. This is part of our heritage as a university. Our commitment is a reflection both of our loyalty to our

students, faculty and staff, and our commitment to the fundamental values of our university. These values include our robust international engagement in many forms, and our desire to reach out around the world to attract extraordinarily talented students and researchers who will have a positive impact on our community and contribute to knowledge and progress in the future. International education is one of the best ways to build bridges and understanding among peoples and nations, and thus the foundation for peace.

Every country is entitled to defend its borders, to define an immigration policy, to keep its residents safe and to protect itself from terrorism. It is understandable that we will disagree about what measures are appropriate in pursuit of these goals. But we should be clear that there is no reasonable basis in pursuit of those goals to support the measures taken Friday. These measures were implemented with a callous indifference to their immediate impact on individuals and their families.

To reiterate and expand upon our commitments:

Absent legal compulsion, we will not reveal the immigration status, citizenship or national origin of any student.

Given the threat posed by the order on Friday, I have asked our general counsel to develop a plan to provide legal assistance to any student or employee detained upon entry because they are from one of the seven countries. The plan will include the creation of a fund to support such assistance when volunteer legal services are not readily available or sufficient. We will continue to monitor developments, and if we determine that other students or faculty members face unwarranted risks of either deportation or exclusion at the border, we will make that assistance available to them.

As a university, we do not engage in partisan political activity. We do, along with other colleges and universities across the country, stand up for our community members and for the values that are central to an American educational endeavor. The openness of our campuses to talented students from all over the world is for us a core value. We intend to advocate forcefully to defend that value, and to protect our students and our educational mission. We encourage others in our community to make their voices heard as well. We fully endorse the statement of the Association of

American Universities and will continue to work with other organizations to convey the depth of our concerns to government officials and others.

Students and scholars who have questions or concerns about their situation are encouraged to contact the Office of International Students and Scholars. We would also encourage students, faculty and staff from the seven countries to put off international travel if at all possible until the application of this order is clarified. We will communicate more as we develop our policies to support our students and faculty. As always, we welcome your suggestions and encourage everyone's engagement in pursuit of our values and in support of all members of our community.

David Leebron
President, Rice University