

EXECUTIVE ORDER ON IMMIGRATION: A Chilling and Harmful Effect On Colleges and Universities

By Muriel A. Howard

President Trump's recent executive order on immigration, unless significantly amended, is likely to have a deleterious impact not only on our society and economy, but also on research, scholarship, and the international economic competitiveness of the United States. AASCU strongly believes that it would be in the best interest of the country and its scientific, economic and military preeminence for the order to be rescinded altogether. We have therefore asked the administration to reconsider its recent action. The United States has long benefited from the scientific, cultural and economic contributions of international students and scholars. America's state colleges and universities are strengthened by the presence of students and faculty from around the globe, including those from the seven countries specifically targeted by the president's executive order. International students and scholars bring a richness of ideas, perspectives and skills to colleges and universities, and typically are strongly motivated to contribute deeply to the institutions and communities that have accepted them. Indeed, recognizing the considerable value that international exchange brings, many institutions have worked ardently to open more doors to students and scholars from abroad, as well as to find important bridges for their students and faculty to study and research in other countries. Through countless successful examples, colleges and universities have seen first-hand that welcoming students and scholars from abroad enriches laboratory research, classroom discussions, and the fabric of life on college campuses. Those benefits extend broadly to society as a whole—the presence here of international students and scholars broadly enriches communities across the United States both socially and economically.

Consistent and reliable interpretations of the executive order have not been provided thus far and there is great

confusion and anxiety about its likely implications. It is unclear, for example, whether the ban only affects new entrants, or whether those already in the country may be facing expulsion. While the courts have intervened to provide some clarity to those already in transit when the order was issued, there have also been various indications that the administration does not view compliance with such court orders as binding. An overbroad policy, poorly conceived and poorly executed, has cast a net that has already ensnared many individuals from abroad who add great value to our nation through their contributions to our society, including to our institutions of higher learning. Protecting our national security is an imperative of paramount importance that we all value and respect. However, the president's executive order is not the right lever to realize that goal, which we believe can be accomplished without sacrificing invaluable academic and research contributions from abroad that enrich our nation as a whole.

Much is at risk. We fear that upholding the executive order now will only exacerbate the considerable damage that it has already done to relationships with individuals of good will, with whom it is in the United States' best interest to cultivate better connections. Accordingly, we call on all of higher education to join the nation's public colleges and universities in urging the administration to reconsider its recent action. **P**

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