

Date: July 9, 2020

Subject: GPSC Call to Action - ICE – SEVP policy on online classes for International Students

Dear All,

Many of you may be aware of the recent [announcement ICE](#) made regarding International Students and online classes. The University of Arizona and the Graduate & Professional Student Council is deeply concerned about the impact this will have on the lives of our International Students amidst this ongoing global health crisis.

According to the announcement made yesterday, students currently present in the United States on F - 1 or M- 1 visa will not be able to take ‘fully online’ classes. Furthermore, the U.S Department of State will not issue visas to students that are enrolled in schools and/or programs that are holding classes ‘fully online’ this Fall. Students enrolled in such programs must either ‘depart the country or take other measures, such as transferring to a school with in-person instruction to remain in lawful status. If not, they may face immigration consequences including, but not limited to, the initiation of removal proceedings’.¹

Students enrolled in schools that are planning on offering a hybrid modality like ours, will be able to take more than three credit hours online, provided that schools certify that ‘the program is not entirely online, that the student is not taking an entirely online course load this semester, and that the student is taking the minimum number of online classes required to make normal progress in their degree program.’²

The modification makes **no exceptions** for International Students who have underlying health conditions and are at high risk or have family members who are at risk. With the rapid increase of COVID-19 cases in Arizona, many faculty members and students are at an increased health risk and may not feel safe both in conducting and attending classes. The modification also states that if schools move from an ‘in-person’ modality to an ‘online mode’ during the semester – students on a non-immigrant visa will have to leave the country or take alternative steps to maintain their status such as take a reduced course load or appropriate medical leave.

As of July 7, 2020, only 11 ICU beds are available in Pima County.³ The health care system in Arizona is already overburdened due to the spike in cases over the last few weeks. According to the New York Times,

¹ <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/sevp-modifies-temporary-exemptions-nonimmigrant-students-taking-online-courses-during>

² Ibid.

³ <https://www.kold.com/2020/07/07/icu-beds-available-pima-county-dwindle-covid-cases-spike-arizona/>



there is no country in the world where confirmed cases in are growing as they are in Arizona.⁴ It is imperative that any in-person activity on campuses is guided by the scientific data, expert guidelines, and the impact on the local healthcare system. Unfortunately, International Students are being forced to choose between their health or their education. The modification does not indicate any consideration for the health and safety of students, faculty, university employees, or the surrounding community.

The University Officials and UA Global are currently working tirelessly to ensure that International Students are protected and offered reasonable alternatives. GPSC is deeply committed to ensuring that our International Students are protected and vehemently opposes the recently announced ICE policy. We are communicating with stakeholders at all levels to make sure that students are able to continue their academic and professional aspirations. GPSC will continue to push law and policymakers, officials at the University and national & local advocacy groups to do all that is in our power, but we cannot do it alone.

We call upon all our students, faculty members, and staff to support our International Students and stand with them because at the University of Arizona ‘we work together to create solutions to big problems, so that life in our communities, in Arizona and on our planet can thrive.’

Thank You,
Graduate & Professional Student Council
The University of Arizona

TAKE ACTION NOW:

- Call your own Representatives and Senators. You can call both that represent the University of Arizona and representatives of the state that you are currently domiciled in. Contact information of members from Arizona can be [found here](#). You can also find members and their contact [information here](#) by entering your address or state.
- Members of the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Judiciary committees
 - Congressman Andy Biggs and Congresswoman Debbie Lesko (AZ)
- Members of the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Judiciary sub-committees
- Members of the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration
- [A Call Script and links to other materials can be found here](#). Remember, they need to hear your stories. Anecdotes, not statistics, change minds.
- Ask your Representative to Sign Rep. Debbie Dingell and Mark Pocan’s [Dear Colleague Letter](#) as well as the Dear Colleague letter from Rep. Seth Moulton’s office.
- Ask your Senators to sign on to the bicameral letter from Rep. Ayanna Pressley and Senator Warren’s office, urging ICE to reconsider this guidance.
- Other ways you can help! <https://p2a.co/IsSdnQr>
- Harvard Lawsuit Read the [lawsuit](#) filed by Harvard & MIT against this policy.
- [FAQ Released](#) by ICE on July 7, 2020

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/08/briefing/arizona-mary-trump-facebook-your-wednesday-briefing.html>

