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Support for our International Students

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Support for our International Students

July 13, 2020

From: President S. Georgia Nugent

Illinois Wesleyan University strongly opposes the recent directive from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which would bar international students from retaining their F-1 visas to study in the U.S. if they enroll in exclusively online courses this fall and which would remove students taking full-time online classes in their home country from active status in the government's Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

Such undue restrictions against international students are abhorrent to us as a community of higher learning. We value scholars of all backgrounds and nationalities as important members of our academic environment, where we seek to prepare all students to become thoughtful, participatory members of a global society.

Our fall planning work groups have been taking thoughtful steps toward a safe return to campus for all students this fall, with options for a mix of in-person, hybrid and online courses. With the health and safety of our campus community as our top priority, we're also prepared to make adjustments if necessitated by changing public health guidelines.

We are taking additional steps to ensure that our international students can remain on campus, and to stand against this ICE action:

- Academic Affairs is working to ensure a core number of general education courses that meet the needs of international students can continue to be taught on campus, observing all necessary health precautions, so that students can be assured of meeting the new visa requirements.
- On behalf of Illinois Wesleyan, I have joined colleges and universities across the country in signing the amicus brief in support of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who have filed suit to block the ICE directive.
- Our International Office and Government and Community Relations Office are actively monitoring the legislative situation, and I have written to U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis, declaring our opposition and our concerns in this matter.
- We will continue to work with other universities and organizations to resist this cruel and unnecessary policy directive.

Our International Office reached out immediately to our international students to provide an update on our plans and assurance that they are welcome and valuable members of our learning community. We will continue to monitor the situation and unequivocally advocate for international students against this thoughtless change in policy.