

Subject: Statement by Tulane Deans on International Students
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Tulane University



On Monday, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program of the Department of Homeland Security announced that nonimmigrant (F-1) students will not be issued visas to attend U.S. institutions whose classes will be delivered entirely online. It also stated that international students already studying in the U.S. on such visas will be required to leave the country if their universities are forced to move classes entirely online once the semester is underway.

Earlier this week, President Mike Fitts issued a [message](#) making clear that Tulane University stands with our international students and is fully committed to their education and success. As deans of Tulane University's nine schools and Newcomb-Tulane College, we join with President Fitts in stating our view that this federal policy does harm to the educational and research missions of America's colleges and universities and threatens the welfare of our students.

First, the order's exclusion of international students undermines the educational quality and research strength of U.S. universities. Universities are places that support education, encourage debate, challenge ideas and lead in discovering novel ways to improve our collective humanity. Academic institutions like ours benefit immensely from a diverse, international student body. All students in the classroom gain perspective by having classmates whose life experience differs from theirs. Such interactions expand their mutual understanding of the world and prepare them for leadership in a global society.

Expelling international students from the U.S. and forcing them to complete their studies from their home countries does not provide them with a realistic or equal learning opportunity. Participating in class from half a world away can be challenging or, in some countries, impossible. A class delivered live, online at 1 p.m. local time would broadcast at 1 a.m. in a country on the opposite side of the globe. Classes may be recorded and available for viewing later, but that means that immediate, in-class interaction among students is disrupted and the opportunity for expanded learning is diminished.

Second, the order compounds the personal struggles and hardships faced by many international students. The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges for all of our students, including illness, quarantine, economic losses, travel barriers and concerns for the well-being of their families. For many international students, these are significantly compounded by experiencing these challenges in a foreign country, far from home and separated from their loved ones. By imposing a cloud of uncertainty over their ability to pursue their chosen studies in the U.S. and leaving them subject to the possibility of sudden disruption, the order piles on needless anxiety and distress, interfering with their ability to focus on their studies and contribute fully to our campuses. We believe students who've worked hard to get into a university should be recognized for that achievement and allowed to participate in class in the same way as their peers, whether they are from the United States or any other country around the world.

Finally, the order potentially distorts the considerations that should drive university decisions about whether to offer classes in person or remotely. These decisions should be based solely upon considerations of the quality of the academic experience and the health and safety of our communities.

At Tulane University, our intention is to deliver fall courses using online and hybrid methods. In hybrid courses, classes have both in-person and online components. This method gives students the all-important classroom experience and allows it to be delivered safely in a way that considers the needs of all students. This should exempt our international students from direct impacts from the order. However, none of us can predict the future. Should COVID-19 cases creep up in New Orleans and the surrounding area, the university must make science-based decisions that protect the health and safety of all of our entire community, just as we did last spring. The well-being of our community is always critical to our decision making and should not come at the cost of harm to our international students.

We stand with our international students and pledge every effort to protect them from disruption to their education. Many of us are in touch with fellow deans from other universities and are actively exploring steps that we can take, if necessary, to ensure that our international students will be able to continue their education at Tulane, without regard for whether the order is withdrawn or overturned in the courts or whether future developments in the pandemic require Tulane to alter its plans for delivering instruction during the fall semester. In the meantime, we affirm the indispensability of the international members of our community and our determination to safeguard their education at Tulane.



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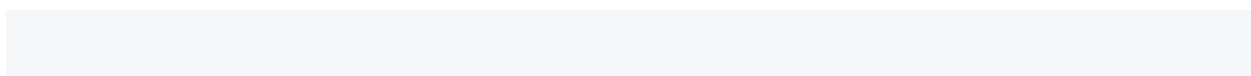
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