

Dear Patriots,

On Friday, President Trump signed an executive order that blocked entry into the United States for citizens of seven predominately Muslim countries. It also indefinitely barred Syrian refugees from entering the U.S., and it suspended all refugee admission for 120 days. This executive order, which has been challenged in the courts and continues to evolve, affects many members of our George Mason University community.

I am deeply concerned about this decision. This is not only unbecoming a country built by immigrants on the ideals of liberty and equality, but it is also a self-inflicted wound that will damage the very innovation that lies at the root of our nation's prosperity.

American universities have for centuries attracted talent from around the world. Many of our leading scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs came to the United States as students or at the early stages of their careers. The openness of our society provided them with the environment to flourish.

For decades, our universities have led the world in scientific production thanks, in no small part, to the immigrants in our ranks. In 2016, all six U.S.-based Nobel Prize winners were immigrants from other countries. Some of our most innovative companies were founded or are led by immigrants—Google, Tesla, Microsoft, eBay, PayPal, SpaceX among others – many of whom came to the United States as students.

Make no mistake, other nations with competitive systems of higher education stand ready to welcome the best and the brightest if the United States is unwilling to do so.

At George Mason, hundreds of faculty, staff and students were born outside of the United States, including our Provost, our Vice President of Research, our Dean of Science, some of our most distinguished professors, and yours truly. Many of the most talented leaders, academics, humanitarians, and entrepreneurs to come out of Mason are immigrants.

Our 2012 Honorary Doctorate recipient Anousheh Ansari is a great example. She was born in Mashhad, Iran, and moved to the United States as a teenager. She graduated in electrical engineering from Mason and went on to create hundreds of technology jobs in the United States with her husband Hamid, another Iranian-American and Mason alum. She also is our first alum to travel in space.

And then there is Mason alumna Zainab Salbi, who last year was named one of the 100 Leading Global Thinkers. Zainab founded Women for Women International in 1993, an organization that has helped women survivors of war around the world. She was born in Baghdad, Iraq and moved to the U.S. when she was 19.

These women come from countries on President Trump's list of banned nations. If we leave talent like that out, it won't be just their loss. It will also be ours.

Our Association of Public and Land Grant Universities shares these concerns, as you can see in this [public statement](#). I, too, urge the administration to reconsider this executive action and reverse course.

As the situation evolves, we will do whatever we can to protect our students, faculty and staff within the confines of the law.

We have reached out to all Mason students from the seven affected countries and will continue to do so. Until more specific and reliable guidance is available, we are advising individuals from the seven named countries to exercise caution and restrict travel outside of the U.S.—this includes non-immigrants, citizens of these countries (including dual citizens), as well as Lawful Permanent Residents of the United States.

The Office of International Programs and Services ([OIPS.gmu.edu](http://OIPS.gmu.edu)) remains available for assistance or support on matters relating to immigration or other concerns international students may have.

It is now more important than ever that we continue to be an example of civility and inclusion, a place where we can all thrive together regardless of where we come from. This is not only the defining characteristic of our university; it is the hallmark of American higher education.

Sincerely,

*Ángel Cabrera*