

To: Montgomery College Community

From: Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard, President

Subject: Executive Order on Immigration Restrictions

As you undoubtedly know, the President issued an executive order on Friday, January 27, that denies entry to the United States to travelers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen for 90 days and suspends immigration from Syria indefinitely. Additionally, refugees from all countries are blocked from entering the US for 120 days. This action has created anxiety and confusion internationally, and for many people in the Montgomery College community. With students from 160 countries at the College, as well as international faculty and staff, our diversity is an essential part of our identity. We are proud to have many diverse student groups, including a vibrant Muslim Student Association; it pains me personally that followers of the Islamic tradition appear to have been targeted for specific exclusion. The contributions of our international students, faculty, and staff to the College are immeasurable, and our institution continues to embrace radical inclusivity as a value that is fundamental to our educational mission.

There are currently several legal challenges underway regarding this executive order and the outcomes of these processes may not be known for weeks or months. I urge employees who may be impacted by this order to seek legal counsel before engaging in international travel. In the meantime, I want to remind you of continuing efforts by the College to protect the rights of our community members. I am proud of the work of our Montgomery College Refugee Training Program, which will continue to operate as it has for over 10 years. During that time the program has provided English language training and vocational skills to thousands of refugees. It will continue to work in conjunction with the International Rescue Committee to find employment, housing, and other support for refugees who come to Montgomery County.

Although the focus of the executive order is on immigration from seven countries, questions remain about other categories of immigrants, such as those covered by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). In November 2016, I signed a letter, along with hundreds of other college and university presidents, calling for the continuation of DACA and the College has worked diligently to make education affordable to Dreamer students with support of the Maryland Dream Act. Montgomery College continues to believe in the extraordinary value that students from diverse nations bring to our community.

I understand that this is a very uncertain time and my sympathies go out to those who are experiencing anxiety due to these circumstances. International students who have questions or concerns about their visa status should contact one of our campus international student coordinators. The National Immigration Law Center (NILC) issued an [information sheet](#) with additional details for those with specific questions related to DACA. For others who need legal advice, NILC has a [directory](#) of free and low-cost nonprofit immigration legal services.

For your awareness, officers of the Montgomery College Office of Safety & Security are not responsible for federal immigration law and they do not question individuals about their immigration status or include such information in their incident reports. The safety and security

of campuses and communities is their sole focus, and all community members should not hesitate to contact them if they feel unsafe. It is the practice of the Montgomery County Police Department not to ask about immigration status in the context of interactions with residents. However, in the case of serious crimes, Montgomery County does provide information upon request to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). For people who have concerns about their immigration status, learning your rights in case of interaction with immigration enforcement is encouraged. The National Immigration Law Center has useful information at [“Know Your Rights.”](#)

Montgomery College will continue to protect the confidentiality of student information and stand in firm compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other applicable laws. Any faculty or staff members who receive requests for student information from law enforcement officials should refer the requestor to their campus’ Office of Safety & Security and Montgomery College’s general counsel. In addition, Montgomery College’s general counsel will issue further guidance about appropriate political activism regarding this issue in the next few days.

In the midst of this uncertainty, staff at the College are carefully watching several pieces of federal legislation that could potentially protect some of our students, including the “Bar Removal of Individuals Who Dream of Growing Our Economy” (BRIDGE) Act and the Protect DREAMer Confidentiality Act of 2017. Montgomery College will continue to be a leader in supporting the needs of international visitors, immigrants, and refugees in our communities, in keeping with our long-standing commitment to radical inclusion. In our 70 years of creating opportunity through education, we have taken special pride in welcoming diverse people to the College. We will continue these practices as we create safe spaces where learning is paramount, and healthy, respectful dialogue about difference is able to thrive.

Finally, I am asking faculty, staff, and students to reaffirm our institution’s commitment to creating environments for learning, teaching, and working that are welcoming to people of all nationalities. The College’s mission demands spaces that are safe and secure from discrimination, intolerance, and bigotry. The College’s Board of Trustees is expected to take formal action at its February meeting to affirm these long-standing values at the College and to reiterate its commitment to protecting the dignity of all students and employees.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about these issues, please do not hesitate to contact me at President@montgomerycollege.edu. Now, more than ever, students need our help in empowering themselves to change their lives. Thank you for your support of our students and of one another.