

Dear NOVA Family:

I know many of you are concerned about the potential impact of the recent Presidential Executive Orders on our international students and their families. There is also uncertainty over how potential future policies could impact our DACA students. NOVA is the ninth most internationally diverse institution of higher education in the nation and we sincerely care about our student population. We appreciate the breadth of diversity our students bring to our College. Together, we can take pride in being a part of an institution that expresses its values and demonstrates those values through daily actions. As a former international student, I know how a smile and expression of care can ease periods of anxiety. Like many of you, I am concerned how the political tenor and recent policy decisions are exacerbating the anxieties and fears of the students we care about.

I am proud of the many ways our international students uniquely contribute to NOVA and our community, making them better places. A few weeks ago, NOVA students from around the world who are members of the Consortium for Community College Consortium for International Exchanges (CCCIE) gathered with their colleagues from other CCCIE community colleges to replant a historic arbor in the Glen Canyon National Park in Arizona. They were joined in symbolic support by CCCIE alumni from around the world who planted trees in their own homelands in recognition of their educational opportunities at NOVA and other CCCIE community colleges.

During this time of uncertainty which could impact our student population, I want to restate and emphasize our NOVA values which include an appreciation of our students' differences and staff who collectively strengthen our institution with their diversity -- race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and thought. We are an open-door institution and we welcome all students into our college community that is supportive of everyone who shares a common desire to learn and better their lives. NOVA is ranked among our nation's most diverse institutions of higher learning. We will continue to embrace the diversity that creates the vibrant learning community and makes us unique. We will strive to ensure a college community where every student thrives with a feeling of stability and safety, as we expressed in the goals of our current strategic planning effort.

We will be reaching out to our international students with a redoubling of support for those students who may be impacted by the travel bans of the Executive Order. In addition, we have been meeting with the leaders of our Dreamer students to find opportunities for additional campus support during this period of heightened anxiety.

We cannot control national policies that worry many of our students, but we can control the culture and values that make NOVA a beacon of hope and opportunity for so many students throughout our region and around the world.

Sincerely,

Scott Ralls
President