

December 6, 2016

To the UConn Community,

The University of Connecticut is committed to being an inclusive environment in which all members of our diverse community can freely and securely engage in UConn's research, teaching and public service missions.

In recent weeks, many students, faculty and staff have expressed concerns and raised questions regarding potential changes in federal policy that could adversely impact members of our community on the basis of their citizenship or immigration status, specifically those students who are undocumented.

The information provided below is both a response to these questions and a public affirmation of UConn's values.

UConn POLICE

- On December 2, 2016, UConn Police Chief Hans Rhyhart adopted a formal policy and released an order to all UConn officers that affirms longstanding department practice with respect to issues related to immigration enforcement. The policy, which applies to all UConn campuses and police officers, states that:
 1. UConn Police will not inquire about individuals' immigration status during the course of their work, including crime victims, witnesses, and anyone who seeks assistance from the police;
 2. No one will be detained by UConn Police based solely on the belief that they are not in the U.S. legally or on the basis of a civil immigration violation;
 3. UConn Police will not make arrests based on administrative warrants issued by Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) or other agencies for arrest or removal of an individual, including administrative immigration warrants and deportation orders.
 4. Information regarding a person's immigration status contained within the records of the UConn Police Department will not be disclosed unless such disclosure is compelled by law.

Again, this is longstanding departmental practice that has now been adopted into the department's Standard Operating Procedures. A similar policy was adopted by the City of New Haven Police Department.

STUDENT INFORMATION, ACCESS AND SERVICES

- UConn does not collect or retain information on undocumented students' immigration status. The University does not have a list of undocumented students. UConn will not create such a registry or document. UConn could not and would not provide that information to others.
- UConn will continue its practice of admitting academically qualified students regardless of their immigration status. The university will also continue to classify undocumented students as in-state students for tuition purposes when they meet the Connecticut statutory criteria for in-state tuition. This is in keeping both with our values and Connecticut state law.

- Student Health Services and UConn Health will continue to treat all patients without regard to race, religion, national origin, citizenship or other protected characteristics. Patient privacy laws and policies will continue to be stringently enforced.
- UConn students and their privacy are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regardless of their immigration status. Under those protections, students' addresses, class schedules, information on their family members, and similar information generally cannot be publicly disclosed without a judicial warrant, subpoena, court order, or the student's permission. In the absence of that, the university will continue to rely on FERPA in denying requests for such information if it is sought in any context, including for purposes of identifying or locating an undocumented student.
- UConn students are provided access to all campus services regardless of immigration status, including:
 1. The issuance of a One Card for photographic identification purposes;
 2. Participation in programs at the Cultural Centers and other units;
 3. Confidential counseling through Counseling & Mental Health Services;
 4. Academic support through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and our regional campus Academic Centers;

And all other university programs and services.

ONGOING SUPPORT

- In the unfortunate event that a UConn student were subject to removal from the U.S., UConn would take all reasonable steps within its authority to ease the student's transition. These may include assistance in placing the student with a foreign institution, including one of UConn's global partner institutions; guiding them in continuing their studies through distance learning; and expedited readmission if they return to UConn, as appropriate for each individual circumstance and each individual student.
- Impacted students are encouraged to reach out to Joelle Murchison, our Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer, as a first-level contact to assist in navigating individual student questions and circumstances. She and Michael Gilbert, our Vice President for Student Affairs, will convene a meeting with campus colleagues, members of Undergraduate Student Government and other interested students this week.

Further, [I recently joined more than 500 other college and university presidents in expressing support for DACA](#) (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), which allows undocumented students to enroll in U.S. institutions if they came to the U.S. when they were children.

In the event that DACA status were to be revoked or phased out, which in turn could cause this population to lose employment authorization, it would become even more important for this population to be able to access financial aid to fund their education.

Connecticut public institutions of higher education cannot award institutionally-funded financial aid to students who are undocumented unless changes are made to state law. For the past two years, UConn has testified in support of making the changes necessary to allow this aid to become available to undocumented students. We will continue to do so.

SANCTUARY CAMPUS

There have been calls for universities to designate themselves as “sanctuary” campuses or cities. Though the term has been defined and interpreted in many different ways, as a state agency, UConn does not have the authority to unilaterally apply this designation to itself. The university must adhere to state and federal law. Because of the limits on the university’s authority, designating our campuses as “sanctuaries” may be misleading to the very students we are seeking to support.

However, the policies we adhere to are more important than the label we apply; UConn’s policies and practices described above speak directly to the fundamental aspects of being a “sanctuary” location. UConn is doing those things which are the essential elements of the sanctuary policies that have been adopted in several large U.S. cities. Those elements include: law enforcement policies that do not question the immigration status of those who seek police assistance, law enforcement not detaining individuals based on civil immigration holds, confidentiality of records that include immigration status, and the issuance of photographic identification to facilitate access to services.

GOING FORWARD

We will soon post additional information on this subject on UConn’s website so it can be accessed by students, faculty and staff.

UConn will continue to vigorously enforce state laws and university policies against hate crimes, discrimination, harassment, bias, and any other form of mistreatment that contradicts our values as an institution.

These are UConn’s principles and commitments. UConn will do everything lawfully within our authority to provide an environment in which all students can feel secure as they pursue their education on our campuses.

Sincerely,



Susan Herbst