

Letter: November 17, 2016

Dr. Charles Welch, President, Arkansas State University
Dr. Doug Whitlock, Chancellor, Arkansas State University

Dear President Welch and Chancellor Whitlock:

In the wake of the recent Presidential election, and the surge of hate crimes that have targeted immigrants, people of color, Muslims, non-Christians, and the LGBTQIA+ communities across the nation, we—the undersigned students, faculty, and staff—urge you to take immediate steps to make Arkansas State University a sanctuary campus for students, staff, and their family members who face deportation under President-elect Donald J. Trump's proposed policies.

Trump's politics promise to put the undocumented members of our community at unprecedented risk. The threat to students and workers requires a concrete and tangible response from the University—not words and symbolic gestures. We write in solidarity with other students and workers across the country who have called upon their own schools to take similar action. There is currently a national movement led by students on over 80 campuses to assert campuses as sanctuary spaces, including our neighbors at: University of Kentucky, Berea College, and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

An internal 2011 memo declares that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers are subject to certain restrictions upon entering college campuses. This puts Arkansas State in a unique position, which it can and should use to protect its undocumented community members from law enforcement. It is the duty of this University to ensure that it remains a place that actively protects the rights and safety of its community. (See <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/ero-outreach/pdf/10029.2-policy.pdf>)

Given that many students and their family members now live in fear of Donald Trump's deportation threats, we call upon the University to immediately develop a protocol for making itself a sanctuary campus. Arkansas State has promised to be a home for all of us. A home is supposed to be safe. We owe it to the most vulnerable members of our community to do our utmost.

We respectfully ask that you implement the following actions as quickly as possible:

1. Declare the Arkansas State University to be a sanctuary campus that will actively refuse to comply with immigration authorities regarding deportations or raids;
2. Guarantee student privacy by refusing to release information regarding the immigration status of our students and community members to any government agency;
3. Create an undocumented student program, with a full-time director, and free on-campus access to legal counsel. Make funds available to assist undocumented students (and faculty, staff and students with family members) in need;
 - a) For current Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, guarantee that merit-based scholarships will not be forfeited if the DACA program is rescinded;
 - b) Protect in-state tuition consideration to current DACA recipients as well as any Arkansas high school graduate (regardless of immigration status) who meets domicile requirements for in-state tuition;
 - c) Include DACA recipients and undocumented students in all merit, university, and diversity initiative scholarship eligibility.

If we do nothing, then our stated commitments to diversity, justice, and inclusion will reveal themselves to be empty promises and hypocritical lies. At this moment, we cannot afford silence.

Awaiting Your Action,
Sincerely,