



July 7, 2020

University of California Graduate & Professional Council
For immediate release
Contact: Gwen Chodur | President | president@ucgpc.org

Students First: International students should not be a bargaining chip for forced normalcy

On Monday July 6th, 2020, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced that international students in the U.S. whose schools move to on-line courses for the fall will have to leave the country or risk violating their visa status. [The decision](#) would prohibit any student on an F-1 visa from remaining in the country under the aforementioned circumstance.

The University of California Graduate & Professional Council (UCGPC) denounces this decision and demands that ICE reverse it immediately. As the COVID-19 pandemic emergency continues, universities need to be in a position to make decisions that best protect the health and safety of their students, staff, and faculty. This policy will force our universities to weigh the risk of infection and possible death for our students against the interests of the more than 36,000 international students throughout our system.

Despite the [administration's assertions](#) otherwise, the pandemic is not over. While we all crave normalcy and hope to be back on campus to continue our research and education, we balance that against the need to ensure that we minimize the health risks to the members of our campus community. This is a decision that should be guided by science, not by xenophobia. Through this policy, ICE is attempting to use international students as a bargaining chip to force acquiescence from institutions of higher education with the false narrative that it is safe and necessary for students to return to campus.

International students are a vital part of the University of California system. They contribute to the diversity of thought and ideas that has made the UC the premier public university system in the world. This rule change is only the latest attempt by the administration to cripple the research enterprise and exclude extraordinary young scholars from studying at American universities. We continue our vociferous opposition to the Executive Orders restricting [student visas for Chinese students](#) and the [H1-B visa program](#). We stand in emphatic and continual support of our international colleagues and students.