



February 14, 2025

Dear Friends,

The results of the last election have widened growing divisions in the country. The dramatic changes taking place in Washington are welcome developments for some but not for others. Nevertheless, the past two weeks have been marked by actions and plans that have and could have profound effects on the nation.

Every transition in national leadership brings a period of change for higher education as priorities shift. At this time, however, higher education faces uncertainties on multiple fronts – executive, congressional and legal. In some situations, the direction is clear. In others, we must prudently choose a course based on little clarity and specifics.

At the same time, it is always appropriate to remind ourselves that a commitment to our Catholic, Jesuit mission is clear and compelling. It is from this firm ground that I write to you today.

### **Federal Funding for Higher Education**

Various congressional proposals under consideration could negatively affect some long-standing loan programs, particularly programs that serve graduate students. The University will continue to monitor these proposals and share what information we can. We are also supported by various higher education advocacy groups and will continue advocating for our students as needed.

The University has successfully competed for a number of federal grants to support research, programs, and facilities. This funding has remained in place with some minor delays, but we continue to interpret new directions from recent Executive Orders to ensure that funding remains intact. These directives will also influence future funding requests. Office of Research & Sponsored Programs is available to assist with questions concerning faculty research grants.

### **Immigration and Refugee Issues and Undocumented Individuals**

Recent messages from our Interim Provost, Dr. Tracy Stewart, and Vice President for Student Life, Lauren Rivera, provided guidance and protocols for possible immigration enforcement actions on campus. We will monitor any regional developments and provide updates as needed.

We will also maintain our efforts to support the refugee community in Northeastern Pennsylvania, sharing in the “[works of mercy](#)” of the Catholic Church. For example, the University is among several organizations co-sponsoring a Prayer Vigil for Immigrants and Refugees on Monday, February 17, at 5 p.m. on Courthouse Square downtown.

### **International Students**

We are mindful of recent guidance regarding international students and want to be sure that our international students are also informed and supported. The International Student and Scholar Services in the Office of Global Education is available to help answer questions.

### **Student Support**

Our students should always remember the many resources that are available to help and support them, including but not limited to, the Dean of Students Office and the Counseling Center in Student Life and pastoral and spiritual support through the Office of Campus Ministry.

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

Perhaps the most substantial national response to the Executive Orders is in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion. In this, I include support and care for the LGBTQ+ community. The University’s commitment to being a truly inclusive, just, and equitable community is not a newly adopted program or project. The core tenets of [Catholic Social Teaching](#) uphold the dignity of all human persons, born or unborn and regardless of differences. The Jesuit mantra of cura personalis calls on us to cherish and respect each person as a unique creation of God, reflecting the experience of God’s love that St. Ignatius felt so profoundly in his life. As Pope Francis put it, “Let us share in this movement of inclusion of others, in order to be witnesses of the mercy with which God has welcomed, and welcomes, each one of us.”

In short, there is no way to separate our commitment to a vital, welcoming, inclusive community from our mission as a Catholic and Jesuit university. We must remain true to the values that have always defined The University of Scranton and our aspirations for the experience we provide to our students along with the rest of our campus community.

We will not compromise the deeper commitments that have and will always inspire our shared work and mission. I ask that you join me in prayer for our nation and leaders as they perform their important service. May they be ever mindful of our shared humanity and, as Pope Francis recently noted, the “...dignity of every human being, without exception.”

Please stay tuned for more as we learn of new developments. For the moment, take consolation in the power of faith, our shared mission and steadfast promise to respect the dignity of every human person.

Yours Faithfully,

Joseph Marina, S.J.