



April 11, 2025

Dear Friends,

As promised, I want to update you on the University's ongoing review of evolving Congressional and federal government plans and guidance related to higher education. This includes the recently signed Executive Order related to the Department of Education. Drop-in discussions with faculty, staff and, students have reinforced my understanding of how our campus community is feeling in the wake of these moves.

We continue to assess developments aided by helpful insights and advice from higher education associations. I recently attended a two-day meeting of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP). Virtually our entire gathering was devoted to topics related to the constant changes and challenges we are collectively facing.

For example, Moody's Ratings recently downgraded the outlook for higher education as a national sector from stable to negative due to federal policy changes, including, "...cuts to research funding, enforcement actions against diversity programs, staff reductions at the US Department of Education, uncertainty over federal student aid, and possible expanded taxes on endowments." These factors, Moody's notes, are "...causing institutions to pause capital investments, freeze hiring, and cut spending."

Since a flurry of Executive Orders and other guidance began to be shared in January, we have sought to limit the negative impact of federal changes and reduce serious risks to essential programs and support.

Areas of ongoing attention include:

Advocating for Students and Families

Congress recently acted to fund the federal government through September at last year's levels through a continuing resolution. Questions remain about several important programs, and the University has urged our federal representatives to support grant and loan programs critical for our students and families. We will monitor the implementation of the continuing resolution, ongoing budget reconciliation efforts and changes to staffing and structure at the Department of Education.

Responding to Executive Orders, Dear Colleague Letter and Other Guidance

Members of the Cabinet are evaluating programs and projects within their divisional areas relevant to emerging federal guidance. As I previously reported, we have already implemented some prudent steps as a precaution, including removing or adjusting some website content. More recently, in Student Life, Lauren Rivera, Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students, and her team developed a new way to celebrate the multicultural richness of the Class of 2025 around Commencement and offer all graduates the opportunity to honor their race, ethnicity, or national origin in a meaningful way. She and her team are also developing a First-Gen Early Arrival Program to support the transition of first generation college students in the Class of 2029.

National Endowment for the Humanities Grant

The NEH recently notified the University that a currently funded grant entitled “Developing Black Studies through the Humanities” was terminated. Originally awarded in June of 2024, the grant was primarily helping to create new interdisciplinary courses in the Black Studies concentration. The grant termination was among a series of sweeping national cuts to NEH programs. Over the years, the University, like many organizations across the country, has accomplished enriching projects that were made possible because of NEH support. Given our commitment to the humanities, reductions to this agency are particularly painful.

International Students

Acting on increasing reports of immigration action against international students, 16 national associations, including the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, recently wrote [to Secretary of State Marco Rubio](#) seeking further information and clarification. Schools report visa revocations, SEVIS records termination, and detention and removal of international students. This is not merely a theoretical concern as one University of Scranton student was impacted by visa revocation. We continue to monitor this unfolding situation and are providing information and support resources.

Our Mission as a Catholic and Jesuit University

The uncertainty of the past few weeks is likely to persist, and we will continue to remain informed and vigilant. As we do so, we will not waver in our commitment to academic freedom and freedom of inquiry, which are essential to our mission as a university. Likewise, our Catholic and Jesuit mission compels us to the service of the human family in all its rich diversity. Quoting Dean William Treanor, Georgetown University Law School: we are founded “...on the principle that serious and sustained discourse among people of different faiths, cultures and beliefs promotes intellectual, ethical and spiritual understanding.”

Our community must continue to be defined by care and compassion for one another. As I have said before, we may respectfully disagree with each other on the wisdom or necessity of various actions being undertaken. We must, however, always work together to sustain this common ground on which we are blessed to work, live and learn.

Thank you once again for your patience and help in uncertain times. I encourage you to talk with friends and family about the importance of our mission and the sacred work in which we are engaged.

Yours Faithfully,

Joseph G. Marina, S.J.