

University of Toledo reacts to travel ban

In response to President Trump's recent travel ban that prohibited individuals from seven countries from entering the United States, University President Sharon Gaber released a statement to the University of Toledo community.

"The University of Toledo welcomes people of all racial, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, national and international backgrounds," the statement reads. "Diversity is a core value of the University. We believe our diversity makes us stronger, and we work hard to create an environment of inclusion."

Gaber also sent an email stating that campus police have not inquired about immigration status in the past and there are no plans to start doing so. According to the statement, UT has signed the BRIDGE Act, which would give students temporary protection from deportation to continue living in the U.S. with permission from the federal government.

However, some faculty and students at UT believe that the school has not taken a strong enough stance in their statement.

"I value President Gaber's emphasis on the importance of diversity on this campus and I do believe it is true and important to state," wrote Liat Ben-Moshe, assistant professor disability studies. "But the statement remains vague and lacking in concrete action items or specificity."

After the University of Michigan released a statement that flatly refused to release the immigration status of their students, Ben-Moshe and Shahrzad Hamdah, a UT graduate student, were inspired to start a petition to call on UT to affirm its commitment to diversity with actions rather than vague statements.

The petition states, "We, concerned students, staff, faculty, alumni, and Toledo community members, call upon the University of Toledo to ensure the legal status of all students and employees who may be affected by the recent immigration ban."

Among the petition's urges are for the university not to disclose immigration status or country of origin, to facilitate the return of employees and students who wish to come back to the University of Toledo but cannot because of the recent executive order and to keep student status on hold if they are kept from returning to the United States.

"The goal is protest the legitimacy of the immigration ban and affirm our commitment to each other," Ben-Moshe wrote.

At the time of print, the petition has been signed by 610 students and faculty member. Ben-Moshe added that some signatures might be alumni as well.

Regarding enrollment at UT, Sammy Spann, assistant provost for international studies and programs, said there is speculation that the travel ban will impact next year's admissions and could potentially have an impact on recruitment.

"We will have some students who will pull out of going here and some who will go to Canada," Spann said. "I have two students who are working on the process now of transferring to Canada."

According to Spann, two students from Yemen were accepted into UT and intended to begin in March. However, due to the ban, those students are now unable to attend UT.

Spann ensured that UT is putting forth a lot of effort in making students feel secure and welcomed.

"My staff has been available. We have open door policy," Spann said. "We have open forums and we are going to have more open forums. We are going to work with the community and some law

officers in the local area to talk about students' rights."