

Otterbein University

Digital Commons @ Otterbein

University Updates & Communications from the
University President

University Documents & Records

2-21-2017

Otterbein Response to Student Petition - February 21, 2017

Kathy Krendl
Otterbein University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/university_updates



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Krendl, Kathy, "Otterbein Response to Student Petition - February 21, 2017" (2017). *University Updates & Communications from the University President*. 54.

https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/university_updates/54

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Documents & Records at Digital Commons @ Otterbein. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Updates & Communications from the University President by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Otterbein. For more information, please contact digitalcommons07@otterbein.edu.

Otterbein University
Response to Sanctuary Campus Petition
February 21, 2017

Otterbein's Historic Commitment

Otterbein University strongly embraces our country's history as a nation that has welcomed immigrants for generations. Immigrants have enriched our nation through sharing their culture, traditions, language, skills, innovations, and love for their newly adopted home. Since its founding in 1847, Otterbein has embraced diversity and inclusion, and we reaffirm those values on a daily basis by providing support to all of our students and employees, regardless of their country of birth, nationality, religion, gender, identity, or ethnicity.

We support immigration policies that provide a safe haven for those who seek refuge from war or persecution, for those who have only the clothes on their backs, for those who seek educational opportunity, and for those who seek to build better lives for themselves and their families.

Two weeks ago on behalf of Otterbein University, I signed a letter, which is attached, along with many higher education associations and institutions that was sent to the new Secretary of Homeland Security, John F. Kelly, discussing the recent executive order and the negative effects it has had on international students, faculty, and scholars. The goal of the letter was to work with the Secretary to ensure that our country remains welcoming to, "those who seek to study, conduct research and scholarship, and contribute their knowledge and talents to our nation's higher education institutions, economy, and overall security."

Though our nation is not perfect, we remain a beacon of hope for individuals around the world. We must continue to embrace diversity and inclusion, and we must welcome and respect the opinions of others, especially those whose positions may differ from our own. Nonetheless, we remain committed to the beliefs that defined where Otterbein stood in 1847, and where we continue to stand today.

Current Discussion Regarding Sanctuary Campus Petition

The leadership of our Student Government Assembly met with President Kathy Krendl, Vice President and Dean of Students Robert Gatti, Chief of Staff Kristi Robbins, and Director of Human Resources and Legal Affairs Scott Fitzgerald on February 6, 2017 to discuss a petition, signed by more than 400 students, faculty, and staff to declare Otterbein University a Sanctuary Campus. The discussion focused on our institutional commitment to the ideals affirmed above – Otterbein's core values. In addition, the discussion involved the effects of the recent executive order on immigration and what Otterbein can and should do to assist all members of the community. In an effort to address the petition and its specific points, the following summary describes where Otterbein currently stands on each statement. We want to be sure that students know what the University has done and will continue to do to address these issues and concerns.

The points addressed in the petition are as follows in bold, with our responses bulleted below:

Issue a public statement reaffirming the university's commitment to support and protect all of its students and workers, regardless of their citizenship status, religion, gender identity, ethnicity, ability or national origin.

- Along with this communication, we have issued three public statements reaffirming Otterbein's commitment and core values to our students and our employees.
- We are creating a webpage to specifically address Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) regarding the executive order recently signed by the President. As evident in the court decisions being handed down, there continues to be a debate related to the legality of the executive order.

Do their best to ensure student privacy by not voluntarily releasing information regarding the immigration status of our students and community members.

- Otterbein's practice has been, is, and will continue to be to keep student sensitive information private. To help reinforce this practice, we use legal protection based on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which prohibits Otterbein from sharing a student's record without that student's consent, except in a few narrow circumstances. If law enforcement subpoenas a record through FERPA we are required to notify the student 24 hours in advance before releasing that record. Then Otterbein would legally be required to provide that information, as would all schools, even those designated as sanctuary campuses.
- It is important to note that we do not request, keep, or maintain the names of any undocumented students; we do not code them in our system as undocumented, and we cannot identify them in any way. If the federal or state agency requested a list of all of our undocumented students, we would have nothing to provide them.
- Some public universities provide undocumented students in-state tuition so they do require a record of the student's status. Otterbein, as a private university, has only one tuition fee structure, therefore, it does not require the status of undocumented students in order to assess fees.
- It is worth noting that international students here on a visa are closely monitored by the federal government through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information Systems (SEVIS). SEVIS has been in place since 2001. We must report on the enrollment status each term of the student visa holders, as well as those students who take a leave of absence, withdraw, or are suspended from enrollment. SEVIS does not apply to students under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).
- Otterbein Police Department (OPD) does not ask students for immigration status at any time.
- OPD does not enforce immigration laws.

Create an undocumented student program that can assist students who are undocumented and need help.

- Otterbein provides a program for **all** students.

- As mentioned previously, we do not know who our undocumented students are, nor would we target programs specifically to expose their status to the public. However, we hosted a meeting on Monday, January 30, in response to the Executive Order to provide information and identify internal and external resources for students seeking assistance and advice. We have no way of knowing whether there were undocumented students who attended the program.
- We are creating a FAQ webpage that **all** students will be able to access.

Assure that all students receive a campus, classroom, and community experience free of hostility, aggression, and bullying regarding their citizenship status, religion, gender identity, race/ethnicity, ability and/or national origin.

- Otterbein has conducted workshops for faculty and staff, including one last spring called “Great Expectations” and one this fall for both faculty and staff addressing such issues in the classroom, campus, and community.
- We will continue to strengthen programming in the residence halls to increase intercultural dialog, and the Office of Diversity and Student Conduct developed a policy regarding bias on campus and the process students should follow in reporting it. Resident Advisors were educated on the policies. Diversity standards were added to Greek Life in academic year 2015-2016 and are now in effect.

Communicate unequivocally and repeatedly that undocumented, Latinx, LGBTQIA+, African American, Muslim, Jewish, immigrant, and students of other marginalized identities are full members of Otterbein’s community.

- We will continue to do this in public statements from President Krendl. Furthermore, Dean Gatti issued a statement following the election to share safe spaces for undocumented, Latinx, and LGBTQIA+ students to come together.

Require Faculty and Staff to be trained and up-to-date in many techniques so that classrooms remain safe places for students of all identities.

- We cannot require faculty to attend training, but we strongly encourage them to do so voluntarily.
- According to Dr. Kathryn Plank, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), the Center offers several events each semester on different topics of equity and inclusion, with topics varying from semester to semester. Though the office’s primary focus is on teaching and the classroom, other events and programs are open to everyone on campus. Events for fall semester are listed at the end of this section. In addition, the Center for Teaching and Learning has facilitated month-long book discussion groups and year-long learning communities around these topics.

- The Center for Teaching and Learning has been building a LibGuide of resources to support faculty and others on inclusive teaching.
- Fall 2016 CTL Inclusive Teaching Events:
 - Teaching in a Tense Political Climate – September 19, 2016
 - Trigger Controversies and the Inclusive Classroom – September 28, 2016
 - Teaching, Learning, and Disability: A Collaboration Discussion – October 13, 2016
 - Do I Really Belong Here? Engaging & Educating African American Males for Success on Campus – November 2, 2016
 - Teaching, Learning, and Learning Differences: A Collaborative Discussion About Learning Disabilities and ADHA – November 4, 2016
 - Revisiting.....Teaching in a Tense Political Climate – November 15, 2016

Identify particular spaces on campus where those who feel threatened can seek refuge and protection.

- Currently we have the WGSRC, FreeZone House, the Counseling Center, the Chapel, and the masjid. We are in the process of opening a Multicultural Center on campus.

Promote the Bias Incident Report process so students are aware that they can report all acts of hate they experience.

- The Office of Diversity and Student Conduct educated Resident Advisors on reporting bias. The policy is now in the *Campus Life Handbook*. Posters have been placed around campus explaining the process and providing additional information on how to file a complaint. We will continue to educate students about this process as we move forward.

The information provided above is intended to provide a status report on where Otterbein stands in relation to the points raised in the Sanctuary Campus petition. As noted above, Otterbein currently has policies and practices in effect to protect student privacy, to provide support and access to internal and external resources for the members of our community, and to maintain an active commitment to our historic commitments based on the principles of inclusion and diversity. Though we cannot meet all of the tests of the label Sanctuary Campus, especially as it relates to such assurances as requiring faculty to attend training, we have policies in place that provide students the opportunity to register their concerns should an incident occur.

Sincerely,



Kathy A. Krendl
President
Otterbein University