

Chancellor's Reflection
Campus Update
April 16, 2025

Good afternoon, and welcome to our Spring 2025 Campus Update. It is good to see all of you, and I hope the semester is going well for you. I'd like to begin by reflecting on the issue that has consumed higher education for the past several weeks and is now directly impacting eleven members of our campus community with sudden and dramatic life challenges.

Of course, the issue at hand is the federal government's revocation of student visas without warning or due process.

I have experienced what it is like to live in a culture of terror, suspicion, and repression. I had to leave Argentina at age 17. I published various scholarly and personal reflections on that period of my life. You might know that tens of thousands of Argentinians, mostly younger folks, were arrested, tortured, forcibly disappeared, or killed – taken from their homes, jobs, or off the street, never to be seen again. I fled my homeland at age 17 with 50 dollars in my pockets to come here in search of freedom and a better life.

What is happening in American higher education now recalls those moments of terror and uncertainty. I am reminded of this every time I learn that one of our students or community members has had a visa terminated.

I know firsthand the emotional rollercoaster of not knowing what tomorrow will bring; I can feel the pit in the stomach that one might have to leave the country before graduating next month. The shock of having to forfeit an exciting post-graduate research opportunity and return to potentially unsafe spaces is a clear and present danger for members of our community.

This is traumatizing for our international and liminal-status students, who took a leap of faith in coming to the U.S. to pursue a degree at UMass Boston. And now, they face life-defining questions.

I understand this. I am deeply saddened that some of our international and liminal-status students have been put into this very difficult and precarious situation. I understand that they, along with many community members, are asking, "What do we do now? Can UMass Boston protect us?"

We are doing everything in our power to protect our students, faculty, and staff. We are working hand-in-hand with the UMass Office of the General Counsel, the Office of the Attorney General of the Commonwealth, the Honorable Andrea Joy Campbell in filing legal challenges against the unlawful actions of the administration. We have been at the forefront of providing material evidence for an array of legal challenges filed by Attorney General Campbell. We have identified and recruited pro-bono immigration attorneys and put our students in contact with said immigration attorneys willing to represent them, again, pro-bono, on matters pertinent to their rescinded visas and related issues, we have offered our students to avail themselves of the support offered to them by Congressman Stephen Lynch and Senator Elizabeth Warren.

Each of us needs to use the levers, resources, and channels available in our communities to speak out, debate, learn, fight for fairness and justice, and push back against unlawful mandates.

We will continue to work closely with state government leaders, the UMass president's office, and our elected representatives in Congress. We will continue coordinating legal supports and affirming the right of our international students to fully engage in the UMass Boston educational experience. Should an ICE agent arrive on our campus, I – in consultation with our Office of General Counsel – will review the agent's documents and ensure that the agent has a properly executed warrant signed by a judge. If that's not the case, that agent will be asked to leave campus.

Let me be specific about what we are doing for our impacted students:

Mental Health/Counseling

Mental health services and support are available from the Counseling Center to help affected students manage stress, anxiety, and uncertainty.

Visa revocation/ Student and Exchange Visitor Information System or "SEVIS"

In each visa revocation case, we provide guidance/advice and confirm that the students have received official letters.

Travel plans

Regarding contingency travel planning, the Office of Global Programs is working with impacted students to assist as necessary. Emergency Fund resources are being made available to support our affected students.

Legal assistance

As I noted, we are providing affected students with contact information for two local immigration firms that can offer legal assistance and support.

Legislative assistance

To repeat, we are providing impacted students with contact information for two congressional offices -- Congressmen Stephen Lynch and Senator Elizabeth Warren – who have offered their direct support. Just last week, I met with Congressman Lynch, who offered his personal support to our impacted students. I am grateful for Congressman Lynch's ongoing support to our campus.

Academic continuity planning

The provost's office is working with our deans' offices and faculty to identify options for academic continuity, including the possibility of remote participation for course completion and/or graduation where applicable.

Let's be clear: The goal of the current federal administration is to create chaos, instill fear, and divide us. We can't let this succeed here at UMass Boston. We must come together.