

Dear Lawrence Community,

It has been an exciting few weeks on campus welcoming new Lawrentians, students, faculty, and staff, as they begin their journey here. This time of year always reminds me of how vibrant our community is when we are fully assembled. I am always inspired by the work we do together, the intellectual energy and pursuits of our students, and the commitment of faculty and staff to the university. We come together as individuals from many walks of life, representing myriad experiences and perspectives, and together we create our shared home.

Several government announcements last week are fostering uncertainty at a time when we should be concentrating on starting the school year. Regarding the announcement to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, policy I would like to reiterate the Lawrence position that I outlined earlier in the year. Lawrence values a learning environment that includes difference in all forms. We remain committed to considering every applicant for admission based on their qualifications and without regard for their immigration or citizenship status. We will continue to offer institutional financial aid for students who may not hold a U.S. passport. We will also continue to recruit faculty and staff from around the world, and to provide support and resources to non-U.S. citizens.

Our policy and practice is to protect the information of all members of our community to the fullest extent the law allows. We take seriously our obligation to uphold the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which sets forth strict conditions for releasing student information to any party, including government authorities. While faculty and staff information is not governed by FERPA, we also respect and protect the privacy of our employees to the extent permitted by law. We will not release any non-directory information about any member of the Lawrence community, including citizenship or immigration status information, without that person's consent unless we are required to do so by lawful subpoena or other legal directive.

The changes announced last week have immediate consequences for some members of our community. If you have questions please contact Pa Lee Moua, associate dean of students for diversity, or Leah McSorley, associate dean of students for international student services. We will also host Mónica Santa María, an immigration lawyer, on Thursday, Sept. 14 at 5:30 pm in the cinema at the Warch Campus Center for an open session.

Last week the Secretary of the Department of Education also announced a review process for Title IX guidelines established during the last administration. These guidelines inform the enforcement of Title IX at institutions like Lawrence University. Over the past few years, thanks to leadership by many members of our community, Lawrence has made significant progress in improving our sexual assault and harassment policies and procedures – changes that have served us well. Our procedures and policies remain in place and in force. Sexual harassment and assault are unacceptable. We are committed to maintaining and enforcing policies that protect Lawrentians from sexual violence.

We will continue to monitor changes to federal law around this issue. We will work with the Sexual Harassment and Assault, Resources & Education Committee (SHARE) and with LUCC through the Student Alliance Against Sexual Harassment and Assault Committee (SAASHA) to carefully analyze any adjustments of our policies as needed in the future. If you have questions, please contact Kim Jones, Title IX Coordinator for the university.

As the academic year gets underway this week, I look forward to our continued engagement with the issues of our time, especially the issues closest to us as a learning community. In my Convocation address on September 14, I will frame a discussion of our enduring values and what they mean for our institution. I hope this will be one of many opportunities for us to come together to consider our role in creating an environment that fosters learning and growth for all its members.

Before I close I want to acknowledge that today is September 11. Sixteen years ago 3,000 people died in a series of terrorist attacks in the United States. I hope we can all find a moment to remember those who lost their lives on this day and all victims of terrorism both here and abroad.

I look forward to seeing all of you at Matriculation Convocation and on campus this week.

Yours,

Mark

Mark Burstein

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