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Visas and Students
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There have been many responses from higher education to President Trump's executive order limiting visas for refugees and citizens from seven countries.

Many have focused on the responsibility of educational institutions for all of their students. All have made me proud of the continued tradition of American education as the great hope and equalizer not only for citizens of the United States, but for citizens of the world.

I speak on behalf of international education at the secondary level.

This executive order cuts at the heart of our tremendous capacity to shape young people for the rest of their lives, especially in the direction of mutual understanding that honors difference even as it lays claim to our shared humanity.

At the United States campus of the United World College, along with our 16 sister schools around the world, we see the power of relationships formed by students from different countries.

They work together on real tasks, academic and creative. They engage in leadership, citizenship and service. They build relationships based on mutual respect that will build a better future for all of us.

When students from Palestine and Israel work on homework together, or students from Iran, Iraq, and the United States plan service projects, they form bonds that counter longstanding historical, cultural and ethnic barriers. They learn that they have more in common than they thought.

Because they are young, their prejudices are less ingrained. We can learn from them, and we should stand up to make sure nothing gets in the way of their coming together.

The parts of the world that President Trump's executive order targets are the very parts of the world that need more engagement with America and American students. A recent program evaluation for a Department of State exchange program with students from Muslim-majority countries showed that 94 percent of participants had a more positive impression of the United States afterward.

Further, the countries identified in the executive order are places where relationships between people play an outsized role in forward progress. For the United States to be safer, we need deeper, stronger relationships. Increased barriers to peaceful exchange will not fulfill the objective of greater security.

The United World College was founded in response to the Cold War. Its premise is that relationships forged between young people from diverse cultures, and the bridges built between them, will make the world safer. We affirm this vision for ourselves and for the world; we are compelled to speak out against policies that make it more difficult to build positive relationships among young people of different cultures and creeds.

Education, carried out face to face and shoulder to shoulder, is the most effective antidote to extremism of all kinds. Reasonable people may disagree on how best to achieve national security, but barriers to mutual understanding will never qualify as a viable alternative.

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