



Statement on Proposed Fall 2020 In-Person Requirement for International Students

July 10, 2020

The following is a joint statement from the executive committees of the Wisconsin Conference of the AAUP and the AAUP chapters at UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee:

We join the entire academic community in denouncing a Federal government proposal, announced earlier this week, that would require international students to take in-person courses in fall 2020 as a condition of remaining in the United States. This proposal pits academic considerations directly against personal and public health considerations in a cruel and irresponsible manner. We are heartened by the news that several universities [are suing](#) to block the implementation of the rule, and we hope that their action will succeed in preventing the rule from coming into force.

We are disappointed to learn that the University of Wisconsin System will not be joining those efforts. It should not be difficult or controversial for UW System leadership to take a public stand against a rule that leverages a threat of deportation in order to force in-person instruction, in complete disregard for the public health consequences.

We are further disappointed by UW System Interim President Tommy Thompson's remark that, because of the UW System's hybrid instructional plans for fall 2020, "[We think...that we are not gonna be subject to that rule.](#)" This remark misunderstands the nature of the rule and its effect on students and instructors. The rule does not merely impose requirements on campuses or programs: it imposes requirements on international students themselves, forcing them to take at least 3 credits of in-person instruction in order to remain in the United States in fall 2020. It thus forces international students to enroll in in-person courses even if they believe it is unsafe for them to do so. It consequently puts pressure on instructors to offer courses in in-person or hybrid format, possibly against their own pedagogical or health considerations, in order to help international students avoid becoming the victims of a xenophobic Federal directive. This news comes as COVID-19 infection rates are increasing in most of the United States, including Wisconsin.

We affirm our commitment to our international students and call on UW System leadership to join the amicus brief supporting the lawsuit. Joining the amicus effort is critical for demonstrating genuine support for our international students and for taking the moral and ethical stand that this moment demands.