

Subject: Comms Update on Federal Impacts
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2025 at 11:08:48 PM Eastern Standard Time
From: Guerrant, Emily
To: DeanDirChair
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Dear Leaders:

The last month has brought a flurry of information from the federal government that directly impacts higher education and Michigan State University. President Guskiewicz and Interim Provost Jeitschko have provided some broad communication to all of campus, and other leaders have provided more targeted direction to specific groups and stakeholders. As mentioned in last week's letter from the president, there is a [new website](#) to help track related information, and we continue to encourage everyone to refer to the site for updated information.

This update below attempts to provide additional news and in some cases more clarity on the quickly moving elements, and messaging that supports your leadership in communicating and engagement with your units, colleges, and teams. I've gathered information from many leaders who are working tirelessly on these issues, and this represents a team effort to keep leaders updated. From a communications perspective, my advice to you is to underscore and remind teams that the university is dedicating significant time and focus to following the complicated moving parts associated with the federal guidance and when final decisions are made or directions are needed, they will be shared with impacted stakeholders.

We understand that some of the news coming out of Washington, D.C., impacting our students, faculty, staff and the broader educational landscape is causing uncertainty and concern. It's important to reassure your units that these issues are receiving top priority from the Government Relations-led Rapid Response Working Groups, the president's executive team and other leaders assigned to monitor and evaluate the related impacts of these directives. It is also important to note that one of the guiding principles in our response efforts has and will continue to be to not react too quickly to misinformation, an unclear directive or competing narratives that could do more harm than good by jumping to action too quickly. We remain committed to updating the campus with as much concrete information as possible, but also recognize in some of the situations the university's first priority is to simply seek more information and there may not be concrete updates to share.

What We Know and What We Are Doing

Rapid Response Working Groups continue to meet. Last week, new executive orders and directives sent from the federal government that were assigned to working groups included:

- The Dear Colleague Letter from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.
- An executive order outlining presidential supervision and control of independent regulatory agencies.
- Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) review of all regulations.
- Establishing a National Energy Dominance Council.

*(All White House EOs can be found [here](#).)

Given how some federal agencies are now requesting certification from the university that the institution does not operate any programs violating applicable federal anti-discrimination laws, the Office of General Counsel and Office of the Provost have provided [guidance to units](#) to review their programs and also offered up resources to address questions.

Several new court rulings addressing executive orders occurred last week and are further

complicating and influencing the murky situation happening around us, including:

- Feb. 19 – The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected an emergency bid by administration to reverse a Seattle federal court’s order to pause the executive order ending birthright citizenship for the children of undocumented or temporary immigrants.
- Feb. 20 – A federal judge [denied a bid](#) by labor unions to block the administration from carrying out mass layoffs at federal agencies.
- Feb. 20 – A federal court ruling found the administration violated a restraining order meant to stop it from suspending congressionally approved foreign aid funds until March 10.
- Feb. 21 – A federal judge [temporarily blocked key portions](#) of the administration’s orders targeting DEI efforts throughout federal government.
- Feb. 21 - A federal judge extended a temporary [block of the administration’s changes](#) to indirect expenses within NIH grants. During the hearing, the judge said she was extending the temporary block while deciding on a more permanent ruling.

*A list of the recent lawsuits against the Administration can be found [here](#).

With regards to the Dear Colleague Letter from Friday, Feb. 14, the university awaits further direction (as indicated in the letter). But we also feel we are meeting all federal and state laws regarding fair education and hiring practices at MSU. As Interim Provost Jeitschko mentioned in his communications last week, we encourage everyone to continue their work unless they have been directly asked to stop or alter their work. Also mentioned in Jeitschko’s letter were upcoming opportunities to provide input as federal guidance is better understood — more details on those opportunities are forthcoming.

The Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance (OCR) and the Office for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) are reminding us that all identities are recognized and valued consistent with our university values. Vice Presidents Rugless and Bennett, along with their teams and other leaders, have been working with many stakeholder groups over the past month to reassure them, and all within our community, that the university continues to support and validate everyone at MSU regardless of their identity or background. Another important reminder is that the [Anti-Discrimination Policy](#) continues to prohibit discrimination and harassment based on gender identity, gender expression, and many other identities consistent with state and federal law.

Additional Resources

- [Overview of President Trump’s Executive Orders](#); Association of Public & Land Grant Universities (APLU);
- [APLU Letter sent to OCR](#) regarding the Dear Colleague Letter.
- [2025 Administration Transition Information & Resources](#), Council on Governmental Relations (COGR); and
- [President Trump’s Executive Orders Impacting Higher Education](#), American Council on Education (ACE).

Closing

Change, especially at the federal level, can bring challenges, and MSU’s strength has always been our community and our resilience. Together, we will continue to create a campus environment that supports academic success, builds community, ensures personal growth, and provides safety and opportunity for all.

Thank you for your leadership, compassion, and dedication during these times. I hope this information above is helpful to you in your roles as leaders.

Best,
Emily



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