Dear Butler Community,

Earlier this week, the Department of Homeland Security released guidance regarding the visa status of degree-seeking international students for the fall 2020 semester. This new guidance prohibits international students from remaining in the United States if their institution of higher education operates entirely online this fall, and suggests they must leave the country if their host institution begins the fall semester as a residential campus and then must move online for a period of time due to the pandemic.

This federal guidance was released only weeks before the start of the fall semester, and in the midst of a global public health crisis. The policy was announced without advance warning, and without the ability for institutions of higher education to provide any feedback on the direction.

These federal guidelines are disruptive, inflexible, and counter to the mission of Butler University. We reaffirm our commitment to welcome international students to Butler University; their presence enriches our classrooms, expands our worldview, and contributes positively to our collective academic experience.

On behalf of Butler University, I have taken two actions to support nationwide efforts to stop these guidelines from being implemented and enforced.

- I have signed an amicus brief in support of the Harvard and MIT lawsuit challenging the actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.
- I have added Butler to the list of institutional signatories to a letter to Congress calling for bipartisan action to rescind the regulation.

I am disheartened by the unnecessary stress and uncertainty this detrimental policy is creating for our international students. The Center for Global Education, under the leadership of Jill McKinney, will continue to support our international students, collectively and individually, in the coming weeks to remain compliant with these new regulations. Fortunately, because Butler plans to open as a residential campus next month, our international students should be able to meet the requirements of the new regulations to continue their academic pursuits on our campus. Bobbie Gibson, Associate Director of International Student Services, has already begun contacting each of our international students to provide individualized service and care.

While so many are suffering from COVID-19 and the effects of the global pandemic, protecting the health and safety of all students is paramount. In the event Butler moves to a more remote educational experience for any portion of the academic year, we will work with legal counsel to seek all possible curricular solutions to allow international students to continue their education within the requirements of the new policy.

As an institution, we will continue to do all we can to keep all of our students on the path to achieving their academic goals.

Sincerely,

James M. Danko
President, Butler University