

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

March 6, 2017

Dear RISD Community,

As you may know, the Trump administration has issued another executive order with regard to citizens of Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. Although this new version was designed to pass through the courts, it may also be litigated. We are monitoring this situation closely as it evolves.

As anticipated, Iraq has been dropped from the list of affected countries, and green card holders and people with valid visas as of 5 p.m. on January 27 (the date and time of the prior order) are exempted from the ban. Also, dual citizens who have citizenship of one of the six remaining countries will be permitted to enter the U.S. if they are traveling under a passport from a country that is not on the list. All of our community members who were subject to the prior order should now be unaffected. However, like anyone, they may still be subject to additional screening upon entry. In addition, the visa interview waiver program remains suspended worldwide, which is likely to slow down the visa application process. **We strongly urge anyone needing visa renewals to plan ahead and expedite their application process.** Lastly, any visas that were cancelled or revoked solely because of the prior order are effectively reinstated.

I want to once again reiterate some of our core institutional values in the clearest possible terms. RISD is opposed to discrimination of any kind. While we are working hard to create the truly inclusive community that we all wish to see, I want to state unequivocally how proud we are of the diversity that forms the fabric of our institution. We currently have students of 72 nationalities – including some covered by Trump’s executive order – and we have received admissions applications from 84 nations. We have students, staff, administrators, trustees, and faculty of several genders and sexualities, of all ages, of many learning styles and abilities, and of various religious, ethnic, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds. We honor and value every single member of our community, and we recognize that we would not be as successful an institution without the unique input and contributions of each one of you.

Academia is by definition an international undertaking. The pursuit of knowledge has no boundaries. On the contrary, in fact, it has always depended on border crossings of all kinds. As scholars, artists, and designers, we know that there is a unique power when different cultures and identities come together to influence one another. Art and design are complex, global practices, universal languages that transcend differences. At the same time, they are and always have been entirely dependent upon the interaction of several, overlapping histories and cultures. Difference and diversity are central to our identities as individuals, as a community, and as an institution. We do not just welcome difference here; we seek it, we are it, and we are committed to nurturing it and learning more about how it plays out in our institutional structures and daily lives as members of a diverse community.

Many of you, as international students, faculty, or staff or as allies, are seeking information and resources related the recent executive order. The Division of Student Affairs – and specifically, the Office of International Student Services (OISS), which advocates for RISD’s international community and offers support and services with immigration compliance and adjustment to life in the U.S. – has created a website containing resources to keep everyone informed and prepared. The site, which can be found [here](#), will be updated regularly as events unfold. If you still have questions or concerns after consulting this site, please contact OISS at 401-277-4957 or oiiss@risd.edu.

I want all of you to know that regardless of your nationality or status we welcome you and stand with you as one community.

Sincerely,



Rosanne Somerson
President



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