



Jan. 31, 2025

To the Upstate Community:

Many of you have concerns about how the recent federal policy announcements will affect SUNY Upstate and the members of the SUNY Upstate community. I want to remind you that we have had to respond to policy changes with every new President, Congress, and Governor. Often, that work goes unseen, but I can assure you those efforts are robust, always in motion, and in close consultation with SUNY, the Governor, and the Attorney General's office. Importantly, this must lead to a response that is thoughtful and informed rather than reactive.

Let me be clear, SUNY Upstate will follow the law—as we always have—and we will respond differently only when we are legally required to do so. When change is required, I will work to implement any such change(s) in a manner that results in the least amount of disruption to our mission.

Until then, since no law has changed, please:

—Continue to provide excellent education, clinical care, and research as you have always done without any changes to your operations. All educational programs will continue unmodified, all clinical programs will continue to care for anyone who presents for care, and all research programs will continue to operate unimpeded.

—If any federal official or law enforcement officer approaches you about a student, patient, staff member, or visitor please exercise the utmost courtesy and respect as you do for any visitor to SUNY Upstate's campus. Of critical importance, you must immediately contact SUNY Upstate University Police Department at 315-464-4000. Do not provide any information. UPD has decades of experience working professionally with their law enforcement partners from other jurisdictions. UPD may ask you to respond only if appropriate.

Finally, regardless of policy changes, Upstate's core values have always remained the same. Upstate will always be a welcoming place that treats everyone with grace and dignity.

Below I share an excellent letter regarding this matter from SUNY Chancellor John King, Jr.



Mantosh Dewan, MD

Letter from SUNY Chancellor John B. King, Jr:

Dear Presidents,

Over the past week, we have seen a rush of executive orders and presidential actions that have touched on virtually every aspect of our society – from immigration enforcement to climate change; gender identity to the future of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The reality is that we do not yet know what many of these directives will mean for our campuses and our students, and we anticipate extensive litigation that will over time clarify their reach and implications.

Yet as we begin the spring semester, many students and faculty have expressed deep uncertainty about the impact of these changes in policy on their education at SUNY. Many students who are undocumented or who are from mixed-status families are justifiably fearful for their future. Some of our LGBTQ+ students feel like their very identity is being denied by their government. Dedicated researchers have been told that grants they have spent years toiling over are suddenly terminated.

Let me be clear about where we stand: SUNY is proud to count as a member of our community every one of our students, our faculty, and our staff members – no matter their religion, their nation of origin or immigration status, their gender, their race or ethnicity, their sexual orientation or gender identity, or their political beliefs. We are proud of the groundbreaking research our campuses are leading – from international economic development to advanced battery power to eliminating health disparities

From our founding, SUNY's mission has been “to provide to the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population.” We have no intention of backing away from that mission and its inherent commitment to a diverse and inclusive university and society.

I also want to underscore the practical steps that campuses can and should be taking.

As you know, the federal government has rescinded the longstanding “sensitive areas” policy that generally prevented immigration enforcement from occurring on college campuses and in our hospitals. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that NYS Executive Order 170.1, which has been continued by Governor Hochul, requires a judicial warrant or judicial order – not an administrative warrant – for execution of civil arrests by federal immigration authorities within State facilities, including SUNY campuses.

In addition, as we noted in the guidance provided to State-operated campuses and the resource documents shared with community colleges, existing SUNY Board of Trustees policy states that: “The University will continue its long-standing practice of vigorously defending the privacy rights of

students and requiring a subpoena, court order, search warrant, or other applicable exception to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (such as a health and safety emergency or student waiver), prior to releasing information to law enforcement about a student or group of students. This includes information about national origin, religion, and immigration status.”

If students on your campus have concerns about immigration-related issues, please encourage them to call the New York State Office for New Americans hotline at 1-800-566-7636 to access answers to immigration and naturalization questions and for referrals to free legal help and programs.

In the coming weeks and months, there will no doubt be more federal changes that impact our campuses and our students, and more clarity about the policies that have already been put in place. We will work together to understand and navigate this changing landscape – to find the opportunities where we can, and to address the challenges.

I continue to wake up every morning believing deeply in the unique power of public higher education to strengthen the lives of our students and the health of our democracy. And I go to sleep each night proud of the work we are doing together at SUNY to tangibly deliver on these aspirations for the students we are privileged to serve.

Thank you as always for your leadership and your service.

Sincerely,

John B. King, Jr., J.D., Ed.D.