

October 29, 2017

FROM: The Second Senate of the Vassar Student Association (VSA)

TO: Elizabeth Bradley, President of Vassar College

RE: Response to the Repeal of DACA

We, the VSA Senate, believe you, as President of Vassar College, should take a firm stance on the repeal of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) by the Trump administration. In our Senate meeting on September 10, 2017, you indicated to the VSA that the decision to repeal DACA was objectionable. We, too, find the repeal abhorrent and antithetical to our Guiding Principles. Particularly, our Third Guiding Principle which mandates that we:

work with the goal of restorative justice for those students of marginalized identities who have historically or otherwise experienced violence against their personhood as students at Vassar.

As a governing body, our Guiding Principles clearly dictate that we take action. Restorative justice is not a passive pursuit. We believe that your sentiments should be accompanied by explicit steps to resist and challenge the repeal as it constitutes an affront to the personhood of targeted individuals at Vassar. If the repeal affects even a *single* member of the Vassar community, that is an unacceptable reality for all of us. As David C. Coates said, “An injury to one is an injury to all.”

That being said, the VSA believes it is imperative that you take concrete actions in response to the repeal. To authentically resist and rebuke this move by the Trump administration, we, the VSA, urge you to use the full resources of the College at your disposal to:

1. File an amicus curiae (‘friend of the court’) brief to the University of California school-system, supporting their legal challenge.
 - a. If this is not done, provide us with explicit reasoning and information behind a decision not to do so.
2. Explore substantive forms of collaboration with other colleges and universities in the area—i.e. Seven Sisters Colleges, Marist, Dutchess Community College, New Paltz, Bard, etc.—in the form of sharing resources, having forums across the colleges, and urging them to file the amicus curiae as well.
3. Reach out to and support members of the Hudson Valley community by means that include but are not limited to extending the College’s resources (financial, legal, and otherwise) to those impacted by this decision.
4. Publicize your willingness to offer financial support and legal counsel, so that Dreamers and undocumented students may reach out if comfortable to access these resources.
5. Empower and publicize an independent coalition of community members, faculty, and students that is supported by the College and can be a support network for those impacted through educational, legal, emotional and other means that people can turn to when needed.
6. Make a commitment to refuse to provide ICE agents or other federal officials with information on undocumented students. In addition to the symbolic act of filing an amicus curiae, this concrete action would represent solidarity with Vassar students and undocumented people in the Hudson Valley.
 - a. Provide the entirety of Vassar’s community with the official plan in the situation that an ICE agent comes to campus.

As an institution that advocates freedom of thought, it is our duty to oppose unjust legislation. "One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws." (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Addendum concerning the *amicus curiae* brief:

The Second Senate of the Vassar Student Association is formally requesting that Vassar College, and Elizabeth Bradley in her capacity as President of Vassar College, firmly and publicly oppose the repeal of the Delayed Action for Childhood Arrivals program by filing an *amicus curiae* brief to the University of California in support of their lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

We believe the abrupt and arbitrary termination of the DACA program by the Trump Administration not only unconstitutionally violates the rights of Vassar College and its students, but also violates our core values as an institution of higher education. The Mission Statement of Vassar College contains the following: "Vassar...strives to pursue diversity, inclusion, and equity as essential components of a rich intellectual and cultural environment in which *all members, including those from underrepresented and marginalized groups, are valued and empowered to thrive.*" The repeal of DACA forecloses this possibility for undocumented students at Vassar College. We cannot, as an institution, fail to resist this development. Filing an *amicus curiae* brief in support of the University of California's suit is a powerful symbolic gesture toward this resistance. Symbolism matters in today's divided political climate, and we believe Vassar should use this opportunity to demonstrate its values in the public sphere and lend its voice to this struggle.

Vassar College holds a unique place in United States higher education, as does the University of California. While the UC system represents the highest level of excellence among publicly funded universities in the United States, Vassar has a history, though not always perfect, of being a pioneer in educational accessibility to groups traditionally denied a place at elite private institutions. Vassar College began by leading the way in the education of women in the 19th century, and continues this tradition today through our commitment to economic diversity through our need-blind admission and financial aid program. If Vassar College were to file an *amicus curiae* brief, this complementary institutional history, at the highest levels of the public and private spheres of higher education in the United States, would add significant symbolic weight to the UC lawsuit.

While Vassar is not as large an institution as the University of California system, we are a member of a larger group, the Seven Sisters. Vassar should not only lead our Sister institutions in filing a supporting brief to this case, but the President should use her platform to urge the other members of the Seven Sisters to do the same. The Seven Sisters represent a pioneering force in United States Higher Education. The support of the Seven Sisters to the University of California's lawsuit would reinforce the continual need for diversity and inclusion in the realm of higher education for groups that have historically and continued to be denied the opportunity for education: low income persons, undocumented persons, and women.

<http://universityofcalifornia.edu/sites/default/files/UC-DACA-Complaint.pdf>