

Texas State community still divided on immigration reform

By Kayla Duff

SAN MARCOS – After months filled with protests and petitions, members of the Texas State community are still divided on President Donald Trump's proposed federal immigration policies.

Since his election, President Donald Trump has set an end to the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which allows young immigrants who entered the country illegally as minors a temporary reprieve from deportation and grants them permission to work. Trump has also signed an order to increase the presence of immigration officials at the border, and recently proposed a sweeping immigration reform platform that emphasized the construction of a border wall on the United States' southern border with Mexico. Activists on both sides of the issue have been vocal in the San Marcos area, and the campus community has mixed feelings on these policies and their immediate effect.

According to Texas State's Marketing website, 36 percent of the university's estimated 39,000 students identify as Hispanic. Because of Texas State's reputation as a Hispanic-serving institution, some students have high expectations about how the university should be protecting students that may be affected by immigration reform.

"I hear Hispanic-serving institution and I don't just think the admittance of Hispanic and Latino students," said Miguel Porfirio, a Texas State senior. "I also see rhetorical messages; you could put, like, an immigration lawyer on campus or a better response to anti-immigration sentiments like white supremacy banners on campus. It does not end at just admitting Hispanic students."

Many campus leaders hope that Texas State's administration will place more emphasis on the protection and servitude of its campus community, particularly recipients of the DACA program.

"I think that the language coming from the administration has been appropriate with regard to their commitment to protect DACA recipients," said James Bouzard, a professor on campus and the director of Christ Chapel at Texas State. "However, the same administration's rather lackluster condemnation of certain hateful acts and their slowness to come to that declaration of condemnation suggests to me that they are not as zealous as they should be."

Despite students' wishes for more action from the university administration, some people feel that Texas State is already doing as much as it can to protect DACA recipients and other students affected by immigration reform.

"I mean, the school can only legally do so much in this situation, so overall I think the school is doing everything they can to cater and protect as much as possible," said Hondo Garcia, a Texas State freshman.

In 2017, multiple flyers advocating white supremacy and immigration enforcement were posted around the Texas State campus. In December, UPD issued criminal trespass warnings to five men suspected of hanging the flyers, according to an official update on UPD's Facebook page.

While most people disagree with the white supremacy messages, some students do feel that immigration laws should be enforced more strictly.

“I just don’t think it’s right for people to illegally come into this country,” said Angela Ocnazchek, a Texas State sophomore. “I know getting a citizenship can be hard, but that doesn’t mean you can just cheat the system.”

Many students, however, oppose the idea of deporting people who entered the United States illegally, and believe that they should be able to pursue life in the United States just like anyone else.

“The old rule in this country was built on immigration; we were built on the idea of everyone else coming in and being able to have an American Dream,” said Sedric Bostic, a Texas State junior. “And now you’re trying to make a reform that stops that dream and what we were built on.”

Many students who attend Texas State have friends or family members who are affected by Trump’s immigration policies. Most people agree that immigration reform should prioritize those people and their contributions to the country.

“I hope we tackle our own ideal of diversity and freedom and apply it to our policies that we’re putting into place, especially with immigration,” said Laitlin Kyle, a Texas State sophomore. “If we want to say we’re the best country, we should add some truth to it.”