

AFT Local 1493 (San Mateo Community College Federation of Teachers) condemns SEVP's modification to temporary exemptions for nonimmigrant students taking online classes during the Fall 2020 semester

Whereas, the [AFT Local 1493 constitution](#) states the objectives of “[promoting] the welfare of students and the advancement of community college education in the public interest” and “[obtaining] for faculty their rightful voice in shaping educational policy and in establishing the conditions under which they teach”; and

Whereas, international students are essential members of our communities who immensely enrich academic, social, and cultural life at our campuses; and

Whereas, as of July 11th, the global COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in more than 12.5 million confirmed cases and more than 561,000 confirmed deaths worldwide ([New York Times](#)); and

Whereas, COVID-19 is a highly contagious disease that spreads more rapidly in large, indoor gatherings such as college classes; and

Whereas, this pandemic has already resulted in immense disruption and emotional and physical distress in all our communities, and particularly among international students; and

Whereas, the San Mateo Community College District, with faculty support, has announced that the majority of classes will be online in the Fall in order to support the health and safety of faculty, staff and students; and

Whereas, on July 6th, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced [modifications to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program](#) (SEVP) mandating that Nonimmigrant students on F-1 and M-1 visas cannot take classes solely online in the Fall 2020 semester and remain in the United states (SEVP will strip students in online programs of their visas and even deport them if they do not return to their “home countries” or transfer to schools with in-person courses) and that SEVP will not issue visas to students planning to enroll in fully online programs; and

Whereas, this policy is a continuation of the Trump administration's history of xenophobic policies and of disregard for public health; and

Whereas, ICE announced this policy abruptly, without a “notice and comment period,” without adequate justification, and without consideration of the wellbeing of students, faculty, staff and communities; and

Whereas, classes in the San Mateo Community College District start in August and the late announcement of this policy leaves students, faculty and staff with no time to adapt, a situation that will cause emotional and financial stress; and

Whereas, this policy could force F-1 and M-1 students to endanger their health by traveling; and

Whereas, many countries may not allow students' traveling from the U.S. to enter or may force them into extended quarantines; and

Whereas, students often face uncertain or dangerous situations outside the United States, including, but not limited to, poor access to resources for effective studies, housing instability, food instability, and persecution by their governments; and

Whereas, this policy forces our colleges and other educational institutions to consider re-opening in-person classes at a time when COVID-19 cases in the U.S. are still rising, a re-opening that would endanger the health of faculty, staff, students and their communities;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the members of Local 1493 condemn the SEVP policy announced on July 6th as a dangerous attack on our students, faculty and staff, that forces us to comply with an arbitrary restriction at the expense of our health; and

Be it further resolved, that Local 1493 reassert their commitment to welcoming all students, including international students, to our courses and communities, and of combating xenophobia and inequity at all levels; and

Be it further resolved, that Local 1493 urge SEVP to rescind the July 6th policy and re-assert the March 2020 policy allowing students to receive and maintain F-1 and M-1 visas while taking classes online at least through the end of 2020 so that students and institutions can have the flexibility to make the best choices for their local contexts; and

Be it further resolved, that Local 1493 support the lawsuits challenging this policy brought against the United States Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement by the State of California, University of California, Harvard, MIT and others; and

Be it further resolved, that Local 1493 shall support efforts to ensure that students on F-1 and M-1 visas can continue their studies and complete their degree or transfer goals in the San Mateo Community College District without disruption; and

Be it further resolved, that Local 1493 shall support the continued employment and payment of international student workers in the district, regardless of their locations; and

Finally, be it resolved, that Local 1493 shall create a plan for how to use its resources and energies to enact the goals of this resolution.