IPO Session on Immigration and Executive Orders
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GSS and IPO will continue with more sessions if it is necessary
Students can bring in any issue that IPO might not be aware of
Entire campus is concerned and following the developments of new Executive Orders (EO)

Three main topics for discussion:
- Most recent executive order (Monday 6, 2017)
- Separate issue related to the Executive Order
- Expedited Process of H1b visa

March 6 Executive Order
- President signed new order on March 6th, a “kinder” version of the 7 countries ban. Government might have realized they “got burned” the first time in terms of legal issues. This EO rescinds the previous order. Implications of Jan 27 EO are now gone.
- New order has become only for 6 countries: Iran, Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Lybia, and Syria. UMASS has students from 3 of the affected countries. Iran is the 4th bigger international student population at UMASS.
- The new EO includes a 90 days travel ban from people of those countries.
- There is a 10 days transition, the order will start on March 16th, no new visas will be issued for national from those countries. If you have a visa before, it is still valid (this is a big change from the previous EO)
- You are allowed to travel and reenter the United States if you have a valid visa. The issue for UMass is that most Iranian students have a single entry visa.
- During the 3 month window, there will be no consular services for these countries
- U.S. permanent resident (green card holders) are not affected by this, neither dual nationals (e.g. People born in Iran but nationals of Canada or the UK) so in this case, if you use a passport from the second country, you are eligible to enter the U.S.

Issues related to the Executive Order
- For any internationals, expired visas might take longer to process since the mailing system is no longer in place. All people renewing visas, have to attend the in person interview in a consulate.
- This has consequences in how busy the embassies will be, and how long it will take to process the visa applications and visa renewals. This has the potential to create delays in renewing visas. New students will face the same issues since they might not be able to get here on time for September.
- EO specify case by case exceptions to the ban. If you are already here, and engaged in studies or family issues (family petitions) they could be waiver to travel, or visas. It is unclear how these waivers will function. This can give options from people to return or enter

**Role of UMass and the Commonwealth of MA**
- MA and other states (WA, MN, NY, HI) intend to pursue legal action against this. HI did it on March 15th. They tried to insulate this EO from legal actions, but states are already taking action. The legal push back will keep on coming from different states. The courts will fight, since everything is triangulated in different systems and there are checks and balances in place.
- UMASS and the state of MA have compiled evidence and data to support the claims carried by the state in challenging these policies.
- UMASS has been engaged and proactive to provide support to the MA attorney general. The school has taken a strong stance on these issues.
- 117 countries are represented at UMASS. A lot of people are cancelling travel plans (conferences, weddings, research) because of the several issues. There has been uneasiness. However, do not assume you cannot travel, particularly if you have a valid visa. People should not be paralyzed, always check with IPO about your travel plans. There is no restriction to any other countries.
- Border officers have always checked different things when people enter the U.S. They have checked laptops, cellphones, and other personal devices even before this EO.

**Questions and issues related to H1b visas**

Q: What do you suggest for people who graduate and travel?

Ken: You are fine to travel on OPT, the most important is to remember that this is not an immigrant visa. It is an extension of F1, and you have to show you are working here, and not intending to stay in the U.S. Always remember the regulations for the non-immigrant intent of OPT. Remember the T on OPT, it is training, simply mention you are here for training on your field.

Q: My F1 visa is invalid in two months. I20 is valid until 2018. There might be a longer wait. My professor doesn’t want me to leave. Do you need a valid visa for an OPT?

Ken: This issue is unique to the United States. What matters is your status. The visa is only for entry. It can be confusing, as long as your status is fine, you do not need the visa. Status and visa are two different things. I-20 is the most important paper to show your status. One option is to travel to Canada and have the appointment in Montreal, Ottawa or Toronto. There can be complications with backgrounds checks, the process is usually quick. If there is a delay, you are stuck in Canada. Chinese and Indian students have done this in the past.

Q: Automatic revalidation (F1)
Ken: If you have valid immigration status, your visa can be expired, any trip to Mexico or the Caribbean islands you can go to visit these countries for 30 days, and reenter the U.S. on an unexpired visa. Need to consider that you have to hold a visa to enter Canada or Mexico. It is advisable to have confirmation that you are in good standing in your studies.

Do you need to do anything when leaving the U.S.?

Ken: There is no exit departure in the U.S., make sure you get a stamp in Canada if you need automatic revalidation

Q: Canada visa. Is it usual to get it approved?

Ken: It can be strict. You need to prove non-immigrant state. If you have dependents or family traveling with you, they might not approve your visa. Males are usually under more scrutiny.

Important points on H1b

- Anybody under application for immigration benefits (OPT, change of status) will not be put on hold. If you have an OPT application, the OPT will not be interrupted. The process usually takes 3 months and there is no expedited processing. It might take longer than 90 days to process OPT.

- H1B. Specialty occupation visa. Default for U.S. students if you stay longer in the country. This is done with employers, they have always been complicated. The private sector has a cap at 60,000 per year (there were more than 200,000 applications last year). Hospitals and other public sectors are exempt from the cap.

- The process is taking longer, it might take 7 to 9 months to get it reviewed. There was a premium processing (1,250 dollars), that it is suspended now for 6 months. Justification was to clear the queue. Effective on april 3, premium processing is not an option.

- This is a deep concern for UMAC and IPO, this is a peak season for faculty hiring and for people who need to extend their stay. There will be substantial issues to travel. The infrastructure of processing immigration documents is poor.

- If you are considering postdocs, the realistic strategy is OPT and J1 visa. If you into private industry, your application will be delayed, consider OPT first.

- Tenure track positions. If H1b does not work, OPT does not allow you to travel. People might get stuck because of issues with travel.

- Until we have more info, do not get up caught on worrying on hypotheticals, UMass will keep on working to challenging all these policies and practices.

- Most OPT applications do not have a job offer when they apply, there is a 90 days unemployed period where you can still be looking for a job. You can control OPT, noone needs to sponsor you for OPT. IPO does not require to show that you are completing the studies when you apply, but need to verify when you are officially completing your studies.