February 1, 2017

Dear Members of the Spring Hill College Community:

On Friday, January 27th, the White House issued an Executive Order entitled “Protecting the Nation from Terrorist Entry into the United States,” which contained new standards for immigrant, nonimmigrant and refugee entry into the United States.

Many among our campus community, as well as the community of institutions devoted to higher education throughout the United States, have expressed questions and concerns regarding the order’s meaning and potential impact. Since the time of its issue, several federal courts have issued stays of the order, however, there remains a need for further clarification on what this order means to Spring Hill College and to the nation.

Due to the complexity of the Executive Order, it may take time for the Administration to provide clear policies regarding and supporting its content. We, along with the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) and Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), as well as other educational institutions throughout this nation, are working toward clarification of the order’s impact on our institutions, as well as on higher education.

As we await this clarification, we stand in solidarity with our partner institutions of the ACCU to affirm our commitment to creating “inclusive, welcoming campus environments that embrace people of all faiths and cultures.” (Read the entire ACCU Statement from 01/29/17.)

Our College has a long and distinguished history of actions that match our Jesuit, Catholic values of justice for those who are powerless to gain it for themselves. I assure all members of the campus community that the College complies with federal requirements associated with managing international programs. Importantly, the College strictly maintains a strong commitment to the privacy of student records for all students and will not share sensitive information regarding immigration status with law enforcement agencies without a court-ordered subpoena. Because of the fluidity of this situation, the College administration recommends that any students, faculty or staff from a country specified in the order consult with an immigration attorney before traveling outside of the United States.

Spring Hill College is committed to protecting the rights and safety of all students, staff and faculty. One of my most important duties as president of Spring Hill College is to foster a campus community that embraces diversity, facilitates learning and an open exchange of ideas, respects privacy, and cultivates a safe environment free of discrimination. Together as a community, may we find strength in the words of Pope Francis to, “...remember that authentic hospitality is a profound gospel value that nurtures love...” Finally, we must all strive to eliminate the animosity and disdain for contrary viewpoints that currently divide our nation. We must approach our challenges with open minds and respect for the dignity and well-being of all. That is what this nation is about, and these are our values as a Jesuit, Catholic college.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Puto, Ph.D.

President

Spring Hill College