

A Statement from the Council of Graduate Students at The Ohio State University Regarding Inviting U.S. Customs and Border Protection to the College of Arts and Sciences' Spring Career Fair

As the official representative body for graduate students at The Ohio State University (OSU), the Council of Graduate Students (CGS) [1][2] is saddened and frustrated by the College of Arts and Sciences (ASC) Career Success Team's [3] decision to include U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), an agency under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), at its annual ASC Spring Career fair on Tuesday January 20th, 2026.

In the days leading up to the fair, CGS was informed by multiple graduate students that in response to concerns expressed via emails addressed to ASC Leadership, ASC Career Success Team members, and other ASC Spring Career 2026 event organizers regarding CBP's inclusion in the career fair, responses back stated:

"U.S. Customs and Border Protection is one participating employer and has participated for several years in the past. The event is voluntary for students, and they are welcome to engage with any attending employers that are relevant to their career interests. The wide variety of employers is important to provide a platform for attendees to network with employers, explore a variety of career paths, and learn about current and future employment opportunities."

We are disappointed with the responses given, as they were generic and discouraged further dialogue. Additionally, the lackluster response from ASC failed to address the specific questions raised in constituent emails surrounding the impacts of this choice on the mental health, safety, access to professional development opportunities, and sense of belonging for graduate students (and the wider ASC and Columbus Campus communities). It is disrespectful and dismissive of these concerns, and furthermore naïve to act and respond as if this is a typical academic year and that we as a campus community can carry on with "business as usual."

Considering recent violence [4][5][6][7] and racially- and ethnically- motivated profiling of both US citizens and non citizens [8][9][10][11] by U.S. Department of Homeland Security officers (including agencies such as CBP and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)), this year stands apart from those before, as the presence of any office from DHS on OSU's campus during this time has caused many students heightened stress, anxiety, and fear (seen not only on OSU's campus, but on campuses nationwide) [8][10][12][13][14][15][16][17][18]. This year's ASC Spring Career Fair was held amidst increased presence of DHS officers and units in the City of Columbus and near campus, with immigration enforcement arresting nearly 300 immigrants in "Operation Buckeye" [19][20][21]. This has led to widespread hypervigilance and fear among members of the Columbus Campus community, with many opting to stay home rather than risking detainment by coming to campus.

Despite this well-known and constantly-discussed context, OSU and some of its units continue to exhibit a lack of consideration about how the increased presence of DHS officers and agencies in Columbus and near campus is impacting its students. The University claims to believe in its Shared

Values of Care and Compassion [22], where we “support each other’s physical and mental health,” and Inclusion and Equity, where we “intentionally foster a sense of belonging where all are valued” and “acknowledge and address individual and systemic effects of bias and discrimination.” However, by allowing U.S. Customs and Border Protection at an event organized by the College of Arts and Sciences, which is touted as “the academic heart of the university,” these Shared Values are being ignored and creating incongruencies in our mission.

Although the response from the College of Arts and Sciences noted that attendance at this event is voluntary, it is an important career opportunity for many students. Additionally, the College of Arts and Sciences touts in numerous places across its website that ASC is, “Where curiosity is part of the curriculum,” and that, “[ASC] provides top-tier excellence across a full spectrum of academic disciplines so that you are empowered to follow any path and achieve success” [23]. ASC’s response to current student concerns displays a wanton disregard for the students it purports to educate and support, and a concerning lack of consideration with regard to making this event maximally accessible and productive for all its students. As of the authoring of this statement, CGS is aware of news reports [24][25][26] stating that at least two students were arrested for trespassing while protesting against CBP’s presence at the event. The presence of CBP at this event has been acknowledged by students (including graduate students) as a barrier to feeling safe and attending this professional development opportunity [27][28][29], creating clear inequity and exclusion, and defeating the entire purpose of the event, in addition to a response to concerns that lacks care and compassion.

The Council of Graduate Students is unsure of how OSU and its colleges, departments, and units intend to uphold their Shared Values [22] while U.S. agencies that have violated both citizens’ and non-citizens’ rights in recent weeks and months in the name of enforcing U.S. immigration policy are actively invited to campus by University Administration [8][10][30][31][32][33]. We do not feel supported, nor do we understand how to support the undergraduate students we teach and mentor while we participate on a campus that honors previous invitations and collaborations with external entities over its own students’ well-being and sense of belonging at a campus event that is supposed to support those very students that are ostracized by this decision. Additionally, this sets a precedent that OSU values governmental and industry connections above the student experience, which raises further concerns about whether OSU is truly still committed to its purpose and mission as an institution of higher education.

CGS will continue to advocate for not just stating The University’s Shared Values, but making choices that are in service and support of these values, and we would like the University to “use [their] successes and failures to learn and improve with humility” [22] to do the same. To further this goal, and in service of collectively learning from and not repeating the above stated mistakes, CGS requests:

- 1) All university units proactively prioritize students’ sense of belonging, mental, and physical health, instead of valuing the historical precedence of welcoming or inviting a particular organization to our campus. In specific...**

- a) The University and its units should thoughtfully seek out and listen to its faculty, staff, and students who, through lived experiences, can attest to what creates a safe and healthy environment.
 - b) The University and its units must prioritize their responsibility to students' needs over external connections (e.g., industry, governmental). In doing so, the University can ensure *all* students feel welcome at all professional development events without fearing detainment or profiling that may endanger them, their educations, and their future careers.
 - c) The University and its units must take accountability when they fail to uphold The University's Shared Values, especially when students express concerns following decisions made supposedly in support of their educations and careers.
- 2) ASC leadership and/or the ASC Career Success Leadership publish a thoughtful apology to the campus community for making students feel unwelcome or in danger, taking accountability for the organizational choices that led to these impacts on student belonging, for the dismissive responses offered in response to students' concerns, and stating how the college plans to avoid such actions in the future.

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