Members of the ComArtSci community,

President Trump’s executive order on immigration has led to uncertainty and concern in the academic community. President Simon has stated that the executive order is an impediment to our core values of excellence, inclusiveness and connectivity.

In the last few days, I have encountered students and faculty who have expressed concern about the executive order. In most cases, students want to be heard and reassured. For some, the executive order has an immediate effect on their own travel. Others are worried about the effects on their family and friends. If you are approached by students or colleagues who are in this predicament, please direct them to the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) resource page on the executive order.

Many young people from around the world dream of attending university in the United States. I was one of them roughly 30 years ago, who was fortunate enough to realize his dream. Dreams of immigrants are fueled by more than the hope of upward mobility or a better economic future. They are also animated by the ethos and ideals of democracy. Values such as decency, compassion, hard work, due process, rule of law, unbounded optimism and an indomitable can-do spirit make us the beacon of hope and the city on a hill for people from afar. The soft power of our country lies in these immutable values that is no match for any arsenal.

Over the last few days, I have struggled to reconcile with a myriad of thoughts. I empathize with the refugees and dreamers who have waited many years to experience the American Dream. I empathize with some of our citizens for whom the American Dream has been elusive. And I all see the potential threat of terrorism, which cannot be ignored. But we should be careful not to conflate these three threads and jump to conclusions of cause and effect.

I don’t have an answer. But I know it is important to resist the reflex to batten down the hatches because it will snuff out the flame of freedom in the hearts and minds of the citizens of the world.

I assure you that we remain committed to an environment of inclusion, mutual understanding, cultural openness and free expression. If you know of a member of our community who has been affected by these developments, I am available to listen and help. Further, we have developed a ComArtSci resource page on this topic that I encourage you to check from time to time.

Sincerely,
Prabu