

April 1, 2021

UFAC Memorandum of Concern

It has come to the attention of the members of the UFAC that some of our international faculty members have not received the necessary guidance to navigate working visas while employed at the University of Mary Washington. The unpredictable timelines for how individual visas are handled and irregular communication between faculty and Human Resources has caused undue harm, anxiety, and stress. For example, a simple mistake by failing to meet a deadline has severe consequences such as losing immigration status or having to remain in the US with an inability to travel abroad (for professional or personal reasons). Our faculty members are not visitors, they are colleagues who should be reassured that we are committed to their wellbeing and invested in retaining them as valued employees of Mary Washington.

We thank the provost for addressing initial concerns raised and while the faculty understand that transitions in leadership, such as the retirement of John Morello, who previously oversaw this process, require some adjustment, there appear to be larger structural barriers that replicate some of the stated issues above. The complex and sensitive nature of handling visas must be met with renewed focus and education. We encourage the administration to initiate a process that increases transparency and mitigates the stated concerns.

Suggested outcomes:

- Increased transparency of the visa process: clear timelines, increase in communication, and identifiable and predictable procedures put in place and available on the HR website
- Direct access to UMW lawyers to better understand each stage of the visa process in a case by case nature
- Communication should be frequent and turnaround time to emails should be met in a timely and professional fashion. Questions ought to be encouraged, not met with frustration or annoyance.