

Using Campuses as Illegal Immigration Sanctuaries is a Bad Idea

On Nov. 16, thousands of students at public and private universities across the country walked out of classes to protest the election of Donald Trump to the presidency. One of their main goals was to urge college officials to declare their campuses as “sanctuaries” for illegal immigrants—a controversial move that could start a political battle and jeopardize billions of dollars in federal and state funding to universities.

stated intention to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which provides temporary exemption from deportation for people who enter the United States illegally as children. (President Obama introduced the program through executive order in 2012.)

memo requires U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials to seek pre-approval for any arrests or searches made on college campuses, but the new administration could walk back some of those restrictions. President-elect Trump has already vowed to cut federal funding to cities that refuse to cooperate with immigration authorities, and a similar response to the university movement is likely given Trump’s strong reaction to the recent terrorist attack at Ohio State University, carried out by a Somali refugee student.

Movimiento Cosecha, an organization with similar aims. It wants to inspire “massive civil resistance and non-cooperation in order to win permanent protection, dignity and respect for our people, the immigrant community.”

One hundred campuses joined the November 16 walkout, including eight North Carolina institutions: UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Asheville, UNC-Greensboro, North Carolina State University, Salem College, Guilford College, Duke University, and Davidson College. After the walkout, students began circulating petitions that make various demands relating to illegal immigrant students on campus.

petition, which has received over 3,500 signatures, states that the university must “declare its support for and protection of undocumented people and their families on our campus and in your community.” It also demands that university officials refuse to assist with immigration authorities in their deportations or raids, invest resources to train students to be more “inclusive” of undocumented students, and publicly declare the campus to be a refuge for students facing deportation.

a petition calls for establishing a fund for immigration-related legal proceedings and providing refuge for students, staff, family, and community members who are in the country illegally. Almost 2,000 people have signed the petition. More than 100 similar petitions are circulating at campuses nationwide.

From the protesters’ perspective, all of this pressure appears to be paying off. Already, 29 colleges have proclaimed their campuses to be sanctuaries. And in the last two weeks, more than 250 university presidents—including those at UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke, Davidson, Wake Forest, and Guilford—have signed a public letter calling continuation of the DACA program a “moral imperative” and “national necessity.”

has implemented a new policy that prohibits campus police from cooperating with local, state, and federal immigration

officials. It's clear that this movement is based on more than a few scattered protests; it has the backing of major leaders in higher education.