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From silence to condemnation: Institutional responses to “travel ban” Executive Order 13769

On January 27, 2017, President Donald J. Trump signed Executive Order 13769: PROTECTING THE NATION FROM FOREIGN TERRORIST ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES. This executive order (EO) attempted to bar citizens from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen from entering the United States for 90 days. It also attempted to halt all refugees from entering the US for 120 days and indefinitely bar entry for Syrian refugees. This controversial order resulted in confusion and ambiguity for many, as law enforcement personnel responded by preventing individuals at airports from entering the country, even if they already had been approved for entry and had the correct documentation (Lussenhop, 2017). Eventually the confusion and frustration were alleviated and people who had been detained were allowed entry into the U.S., but it sparked a larger national conversation.

The focus and intent of the EO was consistent with campaign promises President Trump made during the presidential campaign. Despite a stated purpose of the EO to promote greater security for the nation, it incited anger among a large number of U.S. allies and a wide array of organizations, including academic institutions, airlines, and tech companies (Wall, 2017). The EO was criticized as being discriminatory, and many parts of it were deemed unconstitutional by a federal court. Within 24 hours of the EO being signed, it was blocked by a judge in New York and by another in Massachusetts (Almasy & Simon, 2017). By mid-February the EO had been struck down by a federal court (Devlin & Kendall, 2017). The administration’s appeal to have the stay on the EO was also denied by the Ninth Circuit Federal court of appeals (Devlin & Kendall, 2017). A second version of the EO was

signed by the president on March 6, and was immediately blocked once again by multiple federal judges (Almasy & Simon, 2017). On June 26, following a lengthy appeal process, the Supreme Court decided to allow some parts of the second EO to go into effect by the end of June (McGraw, Kelsey, & Keneally, 2017).

One of the contexts most directly affected by the EO was higher education. International students and faculty make up a large percentage of campus communities. According to the Institute of International Education's Open Doors project (2016), in the 2015-2016 academic year over a million international students studied at U.S. institutions. The EO had the potential to limit the ability of international students and faculty to cross freely in and out of the U.S. and also hamper the capacity of U.S. based academics to build programs and relationships across borders. Just over 17,000 students were from the nations included in the EO (Open Doors, 2016). While this is a relatively small percentage of the total international student population in the U.S., the EO created anxiety for many international students and faculty.

Colleges and universities have a responsibility to communicate with their stakeholders about this type of event. They must listen to the concerns of their stakeholders, and respond by providing resources for those affected. That said, academic institutions are constrained by a variety of potentially conflicting stakeholder needs. Students, faculty, staff, administrators, legislators, alumni, donors, and local communities are all important organizational stakeholders, and all have some influence on the way an academic institution might respond to a situation such as the signing of this type of EO.

The purpose of this paper is to assess academic institutions' communicative responses to the EO from a public relations best-practices perspective. We sought to first

define the range and variety of college and university responses to the EO. Second, we sought to determine what factors may have influenced the differing responses offered by these institutions. Finally, we examined how individual institutional responses appeared to balance these factors.

Literature Review

Relationship Management

Organizations rely on strong relationships to function in today's globally connected context, and can only effectively achieve their goals through thoughtful management of both internal and external relationships. Cultivation of strong relationships is dependent on dialogic engagement with various stakeholder groups (Botan, 1997; Pearson, 1989; Taylor & Kent, 2014). In practice, this requires willingness from organizational leadership to listen and respond to stakeholders, rather than simply promoting a top-down agenda (Macnamara, 2016). By listening well to stakeholders, organizational leadership is able to build trust-based relationships. Trust generation and relationship management are key public relations functions (Buhania, 2015). Hon and Grunig (1999) describe stakeholder trust in an organization as a three-dimensional concept: *integrity*, "the belief that an organization is just and fair," *dependability*, "the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do," and *competence*, "the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do" (p. 3).

It has become particularly clear in recent years that "public relations balances the interests of organizations and publics through the management of organization-public relationships" (Ledingham, 2003, p. 181). According to Ledingham and Bruning (1998), an organization-public relationship is "the state which exists between an organization and its

key publics, in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural or political wellbeing of the other” (p. 62). Public relations functions as the key to developing and maintaining strong stakeholder relationships, which is foundational to organizational success. As Grunig (2006) indicates regarding public relations best practice, “public relations must be organized in a way that makes it possible to identify strategic publics as part of the strategic management process and build quality long-term relationships with them through symmetrical communication programs” (p. 160). Perhaps more than many other types of organizations, academic institutions find themselves beholden to a variety of stakeholder groups.

Regarding its economic wellbeing, an academic institution must consider its relationships with its students (and their parents), its alumni, and its donors (both current and future). For its social and cultural wellbeing, those same stakeholders are of high priority, along with faculty, staff, members of the local community, and peers at other institutions. The political wellbeing of an academic institution, while affected by these various groups, is also dependent on the nature of the institution’s relationship with elected officials. Despite the possible assumption that relationships with elected officials are solely the concern of public colleges and universities, private institutions also rely on resources and structures that are shaped by legislators (Douglas, 2006).

Trayner (2017), applying moral foundations theory (Haidt, 2012), proposed that in a polarized and politicized environment it is important for organizations to understand “how people’s identity and values hardwire their decisions and actions” (p. 124). Trayner argued that leaders are now expected to convey values and ethos, going beyond talking points to do so. It is crucial, though, for these leaders to understand the worldview and

deep drives of their audiences to make a meaningful connection on issues needing to be addressed. Reaching multiple groups with differing values and motivations, however, can make drawing such connections a difficult balance of tensions for any leader.

Stakeholder Groups

All organizations are constrained by the tensions of the conflicting desires of their various stakeholder groups. Academic institutions are in a particularly challenging position with regards to any highly politicized event. Students, faculty, and staff all have a reasonable right to expect that their voices will be both heard and respected by university officials. This is particularly true in any major decision-making process, even when the true decision-making body is the administration, and ultimately a board of trustees. Academic institutions must manage the needs and interests of a variety of conflicting groups.

Students. Students are to colleges and universities, in some ways, as customers are to companies. Corporations such as Apple or Nike rely on repeat customers who function as brand ambassadors and advocates. Academic institutions rely similarly on their students and alumni. Parents recruit their children; siblings recruit their brothers and sisters; and contented students recruit their friends. Maintaining a happy and dedicated student body is important to the success of any academic institution. International students are also a large part of the typical student body at colleges and universities. While many institutions in the U.S. have several hundred international students, some have several thousand. At places like Arizona State University, international students comprise nearly 20% of the total student population (Open Doors, 2016).

Most current students at colleges and universities are in the Millennial or Post-Millennial generations, and tend to have certain personality traits that influence the way

they view organizational communication. For example, individuals in the Millennial and Post-Millennial generations tend to believe that organizations should communicate openly, sharing information freely with stakeholders (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Members of these generational groups expect to be heard, tend to dislike ambiguity, and are committed to social responsibility (Alsop, 2008; Hartman & McCambridge, 2011). While these studies were conducted examining young professionals, it is reasonable to infer that the large-scale traits that tended to be associated with these generational groups in a workplace would be applicable to students in the same generational groups.

Students seeing their peers from other countries being prevented from completing their international education or from being able to go home to see their families may be cause for concern. Students concerned about the EO may expect their institution to respond in support of students, and potentially critiquing the EO. Students are a diverse group, however, and there are also students who believe that the EO was a good thing for them and for national security. Such students may be frustrated to have the leaders of the institution speak out against it.

Faculty and staff. Public relations research has consistently found that maintaining strong employee relationships is crucial to organizational effectiveness (Grunig, 1992; Jo & Shim, 2005; Kim & Rhee, 2011; Walden, Jung, & Westerman, 2017). Employees who feel connected to the organization, listened to, and empowered to influence the management of the organization are more likely to support the organization and advocate for it.

As with the student population, faculty and staff may expect their institution to listen to their concerns and respond accordingly. As with student populations, it is clear that not every member of the faculty and staff at every academic institution are of one mind

regarding policy. In the context of responding to the EO, for faculty who do not agree with the actions of the current administration, it seems probable that faculty are more likely than students to have a high expectation for institutional response. Faculty are situated within the organization at a place to both recognize and understand the potential long-term impact banning international students and scholars might have on themselves and the broader academic community. While the sentiment will not be uniform across all contexts, faculty senates are likely to make statements and pass resolutions in instances where the faculty feel a public response is warranted. This was certainly the case regarding the EO, as was evidenced by wide-spread critical responses and calls for the EO to be rescinded (Almasy & Simon, 2017; Wall, 2017). One example of this type of response was Stanford's faculty senate letter unanimously calling for the president to immediately "rectify or rescind the executive order" (Pan, 2017, para. 6).

Legislators, local communities, and other publics. As mentioned previously, both public and private academic institutions rely on having good relationships with governors and legislators as such individuals have the power to affect institutions in a variety of ways, particularly regarding the financial bottom line. Alumni and donors have a similar impact on an institution's finances while in turn influencing the institution's relationship with state and local governments through the power of their vote. In the case of the EO, this is particularly salient for institutions based in regions where alumni and potential donors likely voted for President Trump and may see the travel ban as important and consistent with their own beliefs and values regarding national security. On the other hand, in states where the majority of alumni and potential donors did not support Trump's agenda, the

decision regarding how best to respond to the EO may have been simply how robust of a response to make.

Administrators. Academic institution administrators comprise a wide range of offices and responsibilities on college and university campuses. From department chairs, to deans of colleges, to presidents and provosts, university administrations balance a variety of competing needs on a day-to-day basis. Administrators generally report, at the highest levels, to either a board or some other form of governing body. Administrators address concerns, both expressed and unexpressed, of a range of constituent groups. It can also be the role and responsibility of administration to take public stances and make statements regarding events of the day.

Depending on the location of the institution and the composition of its stakeholder groups, administrators may be expected to make statements that balance their own personal beliefs, the beliefs of particular stakeholders, as well as the institutional values. Administrators must make decisions about how best to balance various tensions. In the case of the EO, this could have resulted in a variety of outcomes.

Balancing Organizational Values with Stakeholder Needs

Academic institutions face a variety of conflicting tensions as a matter of course during day-to-day operations. When an event such as the EO develops, the potential for intra- and inter-organizational conflict is heightened. Organizations must engage with both internal and external stakeholders in meaningful ways to be truly successful (Cardwell, Williams, & Pyle, 2017). At the same time, organizations must not focus solely on the expressed desires of various groups, as “excessive focus on consumers’ desires could pull a company away from its core values” (Guth & Marsh, 2017, p. 235). To offer a framework for

balancing stakeholder needs and desires against organizational values, Bowen (2004, 2006) proposed a **normative** model for organizational issues management and decision making based on Kantian philosophy. From this perspective, decision makers should proceed through the decision-making process by answering a series of questions: “Am I free of political or monetary influence and pure self-interest? Could we obligate everyone to take this same approach? Am I doing my duty with a morally good will, while also maintaining dignity and respect?” (Bowen, 2006, p. 193). Having progressed through these stages, the decision maker must then engage in two-way communication with all relevant stakeholder groups.

College and university administrators had to make a decision about whether and how best to respond to the EO; whether and how to provide additional support to their faculty, staff, and students; and if they responded, whether to make their response public or private. They had to make this decision based on stated organizational values, while also considering the needs of their stakeholders as well as how a given response may affect the ability to achieve institutional goals. This study sought to determine what factors might have been related to the type of response an academic institution made to the EO.

Method

We employed an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach (Creswell & Poth, 2017). We first conducted qualitative analysis of university institutional responses to the EO and established categories descriptive of differing types of responses. We then quantitatively examined how differing institutions employed these categories to better understand how convergent constraints influenced institutional behavior regarding the EO.

Sampling

Stanford University maintains an online list of four-year degree granting institutions. After removing federal institutions as well as predominately online institutions, we were left with a population of 1,048. A random number generator was employed to select a sample of 300 institutions from this list.

A tiered approach was employed to identify EO responses from these sample institutions (only a response made within one week of the EO announcement was included in this study). An initial search for EO responses was conducted using targeted online searches for each institution. Public statements were identified for 178 institutions in this way. In most cases responses were written statements by a senior institutional official. In some cases the official response was a statement on a university message board or social media platform. In one instance the official response from the university was a video posted to the social media platform YouTube.

Next, if no response was identified in this initial search, a researcher reached out via email to the office of the president (or equivalent) as well as, where possible, an office of international services and a public information office to determine whether a response had been made. These institutions were sent multiple emails over a one-month period. Six additional statements were identified through this outreach and nine institutions confirmed they made no response.

Following all attempts at direct communication, 33 institutions were identified who were signatories to either the American Council on Education (ACE, $n = 28$) statement or the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU, $n = 4$) statement but for which

no individual statement was identified (for more on these statements, see: ACE, 2017; Fain, 2017). Given the public nature of the ACE and ACCU statements, they were counted as the public response for these 33 institutions for data analysis purposes. Many signatories to either the ACE or ACCU statements also released their own, separate statement.

Finally, eight responses were identified through references made in various media channels (i.e. local newspapers posted online). These included interviews with institutional officials as well as quotes taken from official institutional responses. These references were all partial and failed to give full text of official institutional responses, but the decision was made to still include the available material in the study.

The remaining 67 institutions were designated as having no response. Combined with the nine institutions who confirmed they made no responses, there totaled 76 (25.33%, 95% CI [21.01, 29.65]) institutions coded as “no response.” We acknowledge that our not locating a response is not definitive proof that no response was made. The fact that no response was readily located is itself noteworthy for research purposes. Making a public response and then not making that response accessible speaks to the importance, or lack thereof, an institution placed on its response.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted as recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2015). We first engaged in a process of unrestricted “open coding,” reading a subset of the data together as a group and working to break down, compare, examine, and conceptualize the data. Second, we engaged in “axial coding” where connections were made between concepts and a coherent set of categories were built. This axial coding was employed to create a code book which was used and refined throughout later data analysis. Five distinct

categories emerged from the axial coding process. All three researchers engaged in the entire coding process. Responses from all 224 institutions were read in their entirety and coded by all three authors. We coded the responses independently then discussed these independent categorizations as a group. We discussed all cases of disagreement until consensus was reached with all responses.

Results

Qualitative Results

Qualitative analysis of institutional responses to the EO identified five categories of differing response. These categories were numbered by the research team by the perceived increase in robustness of the response.

Category One: Informational. Our sample contained four responses in this category (1.33%, 95% CI [-2.99, 5.65]). These responses simply alerted the academic community that an executive order had been signed that may impact members of the institution's community. Informative statements contained travel warnings or advisories.

An example category one response states:

Given the recent Executive Orders regarding a ban on entry into the United States, it is highly recommended that international students and foreign nationals who were born in or are citizens of the list of countries on the banned list not travel outside the U.S. at this time. Even if your country is not currently listed among the banned countries, you might consider whether this might change while you are away. This includes travel to Mexico and Canada and U.S. Territories.

It should be noted that all other categories typically included similar information and warnings.

Category Two: Passive Support of Academic Community. Our sample contained 87 responses in this category (29.00%, 95% CI [24.68, 33.32]). These responses varied in length and expressed the administration's support of its students, faculty, and constituents. This included statements such as:

Arcadia's community of staff, faculty, and students spans the world, with colleagues and scholars engaging daily in civil dialogue and embracing cultures through research, scholarship, service, and professionalism. This engagement transcends race, ethnicity, gender, religion, political perspective, economics, or geography, and reflects the core of Arcadia's values.

These statements often also reaffirmed certain expectations regarding the civil treatment of individuals, but did so without direct reference to the EO. Arcadia University's statement went on to say:

We also reaffirm the right to an environment that is free from harassment. As underscored in our Civility Statement: A community upholding civility respects the rights of individuals and groups. It is characterized by understanding and considerations of the differences among members of the community.

Finally, responses in this category often supplied contact information for university support staff (i.e. counseling services, office of international affairs, office of institutional diversity, etc.) capable of assisting members of the university community with concerns regarding the EO.

Category Three: Active Support of Academic Community. Our sample contained 38 responses in this category (12.66%, 95% CI [8.34, 16.98]). These statements included content consistent with both previous categories, but also offered a unique action specific

to the executive order. This may include, but is not limited to, the administration reaching out directly to individuals from countries named in the EO, holding town hall discussion sessions regarding the EO, or forming a new website dedicated to helping individuals with concerns regarding the EO. An example statement included in this category includes that from the University of Minnesota:

We are grateful to count among our community more than 8,000 students and scholars from around the world, including hundreds from the seven nations identified in the executive order. We have communicated with members of those communities, and we will continue to assess whether any of them have yet been adversely affected by the executive order. If so, we will help.

In short, these statements went beyond words and included actions the institution was taking to support their community.

Category Four: Implied Critique of EO. Our sample contained 24 responses in this category (8.00%, 95% CI [3.68, 12.32]). Responses in this category went on to balance carefully between tacit criticisms of the EO without explicitly condemning it or calling for it to be rescinded. The conclusion to Iowa State University's response to the EO exemplifies category four:

While we recognize the need for federal actions to protect our national security, we are concerned this executive order will unnecessarily interfere with members of our campus community. As a result, we will continue to work with leading national higher education organizations to advocate for immigration policies that protect national security, but also promote and safeguard the international relationships

and people who are core to our success as an institution of higher education and as a nation.

One may infer from Iowa State's statement that, by stating a concern with the EO, as well as their intention to continue to work for effective immigration policy, Iowa State is implying the EO will not be effective. At the same time, they have not explicitly condemned it.

Category four statements included comments consistent with categories one and two (*information* and *passive support*), but not always category three (*active support*). Of these 24 responses, 14 institutions included statements consistent with active support.

Category Five: Condemnation of EO. Our sample contained 71 responses in this category (23.66%, 95% CI [19.34, 27.98]). Responses in this category went on to explicitly condemn the EO and/or call for the EO to be rescinded. A typical response in this category included that made by Pennsylvania State University, which stated "the problems that are surfacing with the order are clear, and we join the Association of American Universities and universities all across the country in asking that the order be ended as soon as possible." (see: AAU, 2017 for full statement). Many institutions, such as Grinnell College, framed the EO in contrast to their own shared institutional values:

Banning immigrants based on their faith and country of origin is in sharp contrast with Grinnell's values. For one thing, as Grinnellians, we recognize that we live in a distinctly global world and value the interconnections presented to us by doing so.

These statements also included comments consistent with categories one and two (*information* and *passive support*), but not always category three (*active support*). Of these 71 responses, 44 institutions included statements consistent with active support.

Quantitative Results

Among this study's goals was to better understand how competing constraints influence institutional responses. Campus communities are often composed of diverse groups of individuals with competing interests and differing preconceived attitudes and ideals. Data were collected regarding each of the 300 institutions sampled which, it was hoped, would suggest how, if at all, differing groups influenced institutional responses to the EO. Presented here are those variables which showed the most robust relationships relative to how institutions responded to the EO. Due to the low sample size, institutions with responses falling in category one ($n = 4$) were removed from the data analysis.

Size of international population. Data were collected identifying the total international student population for each institution in the sample for academic year 2015-2016 (Open Doors, 2016). A one-way ANOVA was performed using the EO response category of an institution as the independent variable and the total number of international students as the dependent variable. Results revealed significant differences between groups, $F(4, 291) = 9.93, p < .001$. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics illustrating the size of these differences. Tukey post-hoc analysis found that these differences were statistically significant between EO response category 0 and category 3 ($p < .001$) and category 5 ($p < .001$). Differences were also significant between EO response category 2 and category 3 ($p < .01$) and category 5 ($p < .01$). EO response category 4 was not found to be significantly different from any other category regarding total number of international students. These results clearly indicate that institution with greater than the mean number of international students were more likely to have robust responses to the EO with responses pooling in

both EO response category 3, *active support of academic community*, and EO response category 5, *condemnation of EO*.

Electoral College vote. Data were collected regarding the results of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. Each of the 300 institutions in our sample was placed into one of two categories dependent on whether the home state of each institution predominately voted for either Donald J. Trump ($n = 152$) or Hillary R. Clinton ($n = 148$) in that election. Chi-Square analysis indicated a significant relationship between these categories and the EO response category of each institution, $\chi^2(4, N = 296) = 19.72, p = .001$. The percentage distribution of each EO response category within the context of these election results is presented in Table 2. These results indicate that institutions in states that voted for Donald J. Trump for President were less likely to respond to the EO and if a response was made it was not likely to be a robust response. Institutions in states that voted for Hillary R. Clinton, however, were more likely to make a response to the EO and responses made were more likely to be robust responses.

Public or Private Affiliation. Data were collected to indicate if institutions in our sample were either public (operated in part or in whole by state government) or private (operated largely independent of state government) entities. Chi-Square analysis indicated a significant relationship between these categories and the EO response category of each institution, $\chi^2(4, N = 296) = 12.39, p = .015$. The percentage distribution of each EO response category within the context of institutional status is presented in Table 3. These results indicate that private institutions were less likely to respond than were their public counterparts, but private institution responses, if made, were more likely to be robust.

Post hoc analysis was conducted to put results regarding institutional affiliation in context. Chi-Square analysis found no significant relationship between the public or private affiliation of our sample institutions and the election outcome of an institution's state, $\chi^2(1, N = 296) = 1.42, p = .233$. An independent sample *t*-test showed our mean number of international students at our sample institutions to be higher in public institutions ($M = 1249.47, SD = 2106.65$) relative to private institutions ($M = 433.62, SD = 872.35$); $t = 4.23, p < .001$. The results of this second analysis, when compared to earlier results regarding international student populations, suggest one reason for the lower number of EO responses among private institutions may be related to low international student populations. However, this result is counter to earlier findings, that institutions with higher international student populations were more likely to have a robust response to the EO.

Discussion

There are two major distinctions that arose during the qualitative data analysis and contributed to the formation of categories. First, to what degree was the institution acting rather than simply speaking? Many responses offered concrete, active support to their students. Some institutions set up new programs and websites to offer live updates about the EO situation and ways in which students may be affected. Other institutions held open forums to discuss the implications of the EO and how best to help those who might be affected. On the other hand, many responses offered no active support. These responses sometimes provided information about the EO paired with reminders about the core values of the institution. In other instances these institutions simply pointed students and faculty toward existing services. Institutions that only offered passive support to their students, faculty, and staff were guilty of violating one of the core best practices of public relations:

words must be united with action, not simply well-meant platitudes or lip service (Bivins, 1993; Hon & Brunner, 2000). One case that exemplifies this point is the official response from the University of South Carolina, which was a post from the university president on the social media platform Twitter, “We value int’l students, faculty & staff and are committed to their safety and success regardless of religion, ethnicity or nat’l origin.” Prior research has shown that college and university use of Twitter as a public relations tool has lacked meaningful engagement with stakeholders (Linvill, McGee, & Hicks, 2012). The University of South Carolina president offered a general platitude in fewer than 140 characters on one communication channel. He then chose not to respond to any of 31 replies to his tweet, many of which expressed concerns and questions.

Second, to what degree were institutions willing to make a political statement about the EO? Responses varied in the degree to which institutions were willing to engage in a wider cultural conversation regarding the need, purpose, and perceptions of the EO. Institutions in our sample responded in one of four ways here: (1) they made no statement; (2) they remained apolitical, not making any statements directly related to the potential problems of the EO; (3) they implicitly critiqued the EO, suggesting it was problematic; or, (4) they openly condemned the EO, often calling for it to be rescinded.

This EO, which was eventually and repeatedly deemed largely unconstitutional by U.S. federal courts, had the potential to negatively impact the academic community. In addition to the more than 17,000 students who would have been barred entry into the U.S., and unknown number of faculty would also have been impacted. In a best-case scenario, faculty and students risked being restricted to remain within the borders of the U.S., unable to visit family and friends abroad. While the immediate impact on many institutions would

likely have been relatively mild, the potential wider negative implications for academia as a whole were seen by many as troubling. One may view it as reasonable that an institution, even one with few (if any) students and faculty directly affected by the order, would take a clear stand in opposition to it, despite various practical implications. Using the model developed by Bowen (2004, 2006), if political and monetary influences and pure self-interest were set aside, then the logical duty of an academic institution in this case is to ensure that key stakeholders' needs have been addressed. That would likely require, at minimum, a response coded as "active support." For an example of an institution that did not initially follow this process in its response, but later followed-up with a stronger response, we offer our own institution as a case.

Relationship Management in Action

Clemson University, our own institution, is a clear exemplar of the challenges faced while attempting to engage with the needs and concerns of multiple stakeholders. Clemson is a state institution in a state that voted for Donald J. Trump in the 2016 election. The university also has a high population of international students. The initial response to the EO from Clemson appeared on the university President's blog. It gave information regarding the EO and included rather tepid support for the academic community, saying only "Our international students, faculty and staff are important members of our university community." While this response may have been viewed as adequate by some stakeholders, it was criticized by a large number of groups, including some faculty, staff, and students. It also did not stand up to the test of Bowen's (2004, 2006) model, as it is not a statement that aligns with the organization's stated values, values that refer to the university community as "family". In addition to criticism on social media and in on-

campus discussions, a group of three faculty initiated a week-long hunger strike to protest the university's decision to not denounce the EO (Redden, 2017). They were immediately joined by more than a dozen additional faculty and students in their week-long fast, and received national media attention.

Following stakeholders' expressions of concern, an additional response was distributed as a community-wide email. This response was much more strongly worded, saying, for example, "Our international students, faculty and staff, and their families, are a valued and vital part of our university community. Furthermore, diversity and inclusion are foundational values of our university and necessary for Clemson University to fulfill its mission." The email also included specific actions the administration was engaging in, including reaching out to those community members directly affected by the EO and the scheduling of information sessions for anyone with specific concerns. Clemson's second response did not engage with the broader political debate, but it did offer a perspective that balanced the identity and core values of multiple community stakeholders (Trayner, 2017). The second response did follow logically as an acceptable message according to Bowen's model, and was also in line with public relations best practice by pairing words with action (Bivins, 1993; Hon & Brunner, 2000). It was therefore much stronger than the initial statement.

Our analysis of quantitative data illustrates how a large portion of institutions attempted to similarly balance responses to the EO between not violating core beliefs of key stakeholders while still meeting the immediate needs, through words and actions, of community members. For instance, Table 1 illustrates that EO responses were generally more robust for institutions with larger populations of international students. It is

noteworthy that the mean international student populations spike for categories three (*active support for academic community*) and five (*condemnation of EO*). Clearly, institutions are concerned about the needs of their international student populations. These results contrast with those presented in Table 2 which suggest that institutions may be framing responses to align with the core political values of key stakeholders in their state. These data illustrate that no response was identified for most institutions located in states which voted for Donald J. Trump in the 2016 Presidential election. The most common response for institutions in states that voted for Hillary R. Clinton, in contrast, was condemnation of the EO. In our sample, an institution in a Trump voting state was less than half as likely to have condemned the EO relative to an institution in a Clinton voting state.

One-third ($n = 8$) of the institutions in Trump voting states that condemned the EO were public institutions, only about 10% of the total number of institutions in that category. Public institutions in our sample were generally less likely to condemn the EO than were private institutions. Just under 20% of public institutions went so far as to condemn the EO while just under 30% of private institutions did the same. In examining these data further, we see that this difference can more than be accounted for by private Catholic institutions. Of the 45 private institutions in our sample who condemned the EO, 16 were affiliated with the Catholic Church.

In general, religiously affiliated institutions of most denominations in our sample seemed to eschew engaging in the broader political debate surrounding the EO; 48 of the 90 religious institutions either had no response or offered only passive support for their academic community. Institutions in our sample affiliated with the Catholic Church, however, almost universally condemned the EO. Employing Bowen's (2004, 2006) model,

this is logical considering Pope Frances' and Catholic leaderships' vocal advocacy for migrants' rights (Faiola & Bailey, 2017). Catholic institutions were positioned to make strong statements predicated on a shared moral foundation with the knowledge that such a statement would be consistent with the values and political beliefs of key stakeholders. An example of such a statement includes that of Loyola Marymount University, a Jesuit institution in California, whose response included, "Members of our LMU family are persons for and with others; affiliating them with terrorists violates their dignity, along with what has made and continues to make America great."

Implications for Public Relations Practice

Academic institutions serve as strong examples of the challenges inherent in balancing the needs, values, and desires of core constituents. By their nature, colleges and universities have a variety of important stakeholder groups with often-conflicting goals and values. The travel ban provided an ideal context for observing the impact of this conflict. In potentially controversial situations like this, Bowen's (2004, 2006) Kantian approach is particularly valuable. An important step in Bowen's normative model is care for "duty, respect, and intention" (2004, p. 82). Bowen suggests it is important for public relations practitioners to ask "Does this decision convey to our publics that we have seriously considered their view on the issue?" and also "Does this decision make us worthy of earning trust, respect, and support from our publics?" (2004, p. 82). This approach may mean that practitioners may make decisions not fully in keeping with their own personal values, but it will help ensure statements are not made which may unacceptably damage an organization's ability to achieve future organizational goals by alienating key stakeholders.

For institutions in regions where the majority of the population voted for the president, supported the president's platform, and saw the EO as a positive effort aimed at promoting safety, condemnation of the EO may have been in line with institutional values but not in line with some stakeholder values. Some of the stakeholders who support the EO may include donors and legislators, individuals with financial influence over the institution. Alienating these stakeholders, and others, could reasonably have the potential to affect an institution's ability to achieve its goals (and, ultimately, perhaps also uphold its values). If that risk were deemed unacceptably high, it would be reasonable to not condemn the EO regardless of stated institutional values.

These institutions should still have focused on stated values to the degree possible, however. The response should have minimally included statements indicating active support for the academic community. For institutions with large international populations, there are a variety of steps that could easily have been taken, from initiating contact to determine the needs of affected students, to implementing open forums and launching additional support services. For institutions with no affected students, however, an appropriate statement might look like that of Sewanee: The University of the South, a private institution in a state that supported Donald J. Trump in the 2016 Presidential election. Despite having fewer than 100 total international students, Sewanee's response illustrated a strong commitment to supporting every member of their community, saying in part:

Sewanee currently has no students with student visas from the seven countries specified in the order. We also have no non-U.S. citizen faculty members from those countries. We do have current and prospective students and faculty members who

are non-U.S. citizens from other countries who may be concerned about their future status. The Offices of Global Citizenship and the Dean of the College, as well as Student Life, are reaching out to those students and faculty members to offer support and guidance . . . The primary concern of the University remains the welfare of all our students, faculty, and staff.

Actively supporting students is an obvious priority for any educational institution, and should not have been seen as problematic for any stakeholder, even those who may have supported the EO. It would also logically be in line with organizational values.

At the other end of the continuum exist institutions where the majority of stakeholders viewed the EO as problematic, in conflict with national and organizational values, and as threatening to academia and to the nation. These included both Catholic institutions and some institutions in states that did not support the Trump administration's agenda. Institutions in this category were far more capable of making statements that supported their affected students, providing additional resources for support, *and* indicating condemnation for the EO as it was then written. An example of this type of response is an excerpt from Cornell University's response:

President Donald Trump's recent executive order imposing a 90-day ban on immigrant and nonimmigrant entry to the United States from seven predominantly Muslim nations is deeply troubling and has serious and chilling implications for a number of our students and scholars. It is fundamentally antithetical to Cornell University's principles. Ours is a diverse and global university. More than a fifth of our students are from countries outside the U.S. and our students and faculty are involved in programs and partnerships around the world. Over the last few days, we

have been in regular contact with our community members who are directly impacted by the executive order...

This response demonstrates active support of institutional stakeholders, while also taking a clear stance on the EO as it relates to Cornell's organizational values. Any stakeholder of Cornell University can reasonably recognize the consistency of the message with the institution's stated values. For Cornell, this response was less likely to alienate stakeholders than if it had been made by Sewanee. They could therefore make a more robust, values-based statement with less risk of damaging long-term organizational goals.

For institutions in the same political and cultural context as Cornell and its peer institutions, a problematic response may have been a response coded as *implied critique of the EO*. An implicit critique was neither bold enough to satisfy stakeholders expecting the institution to condemn the order, nor completely apolitical. A response coded in this category could often be termed "spin" (Guth & Marsh, 2017), an attempt to obfuscate or "to sidestep or manipulate the truth" (White & Park, 2010, p. 320), while not necessarily addressing stakeholder needs. Public perception of organizations engaging in spin, particularly from public relations practitioners, has resulted in the perception that public relations practitioners are intelligent, friendly liars (Callison, Merle, & Seltzer, 2014). One example is this statement from the College of Saint Rose's president:

I am in Washington, D.C., for a meeting... and watched from my hotel room as history unfolded yesterday with protesters filling Pennsylvania Avenue to march for the values of opportunity and religious freedom. The results of the presidential election have elicited candid, heartfelt concerns from our current students and prospective students about their future and what they are feeling and experiencing.

Our international students have exhibited tremendous fortitude in pursuing their studies here. We will continue to provide them with all of the support and resources they need to remain successful in their educational and personal journeys.

Disagreement and debate are healthy traditions in our democratic society. It is through respectful dialogue that we challenge each other to grow and be stronger.

This statement begins by praising the protesters following the signing of the EO, while never indicating agreement with their actions. The president then indicates that students are concerned about the EO, but does not state a clearly shared concern from herself or the college. Finally, the statement ends with a platitude about the importance of debate and respectful dialogue. This statement offered no active support for students, and danced carefully around making statements that could be seen as condemning the EO. We feel that this was a missed opportunity for the College of Saint Rose to help its students feel both heard and validated. Rather than committing to either remaining apolitical or to a more robust response, the statement makes allusions that could be interpreted by the reader in multiple ways. Such a response leaves institutional values open to wide interpretation.

In today's polarized and politicized environment, institutions of all kinds, including colleges and universities, will continue to face public relations challenges that must balance multiple stakeholders' beliefs while also maintaining a firm stance of upholding organizational values. As Trayner (2017) points out, it is increasingly important to understand the worldview and deep drives held by organizational stakeholders. When stakeholders' worldviews conflict practitioners must take action consistent with stated organizational values. They should do so, however, **only after they have fully considered the beliefs of their stakeholders** and only to the point where they are confident they will

not unacceptably damage long-term goals. The challenge for practitioners is, of course, finding the balance. In doing so, however, they cannot allow others to apply value judgments that may not accurately reflect core institutional ethos. Future research should also explore the question of when it is appropriate to make value-based claims that may digress strongly from the stated values of some stakeholders, and how to balance those claims with broad, practical, organizational needs. Cases such as the EO outlined in this piece leave organizations with a difficult tightrope to walk. Understanding of public relations best practices may make the walk easier.

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