

GRYMES HILL



Wagner College's Main Hall. President Richard Guarasci affirmed a preference for equity. Hilton Flores/Staten Island Advance

Profs spank Trump, Donovan

Letter conveys dismay at travel ban, other orders

Diane C. Lore
lore@siadvance.com

A group of Wagner College professors has published a letter strongly denouncing the policies of President Donald Trump.

The letter, which appeared as a paid advertisement on page B8 of Wednesday's Advance, is signed by 33 Wagner professors from various academic departments. It is addressed as "an open letter to Rep. Dan Donovan," the Republican who represents Staten Island in the Congress. All but a few professors who signed the letter live in Donovan's district.

Donovan, who declined to comment on the letter, recently came out in support of Trump's travel ban on seven Muslim-majority countries, declaring that it is "in America's best interest."

"As educators and citizens, we strongly condemn the following actions and executive orders of President Trump and the Trump administration since taking office on January 20, 2017," the educators wrote.

The letter "does not necessarily represent the view of Wagner College," they noted, "but of each of us as concerned citizens and educators."

"We condemn these acts not in a spirit of partisanship, but because they violate basic principles of American democracy, of intellectual and scientific standards and of international responsibility," they wrote.

The letter lists five points of concern, starting with the president's policy on immigration and his travel ban.

"First and foremost we condemn Trump's Executive Order barring refugees, immigrants and all nationals from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States," they wrote.

"By functioning as a ban excluding primarily those of Muslim faith, this order creates religious discrimination and does so intentionally. This act does not reflect our American values. It does not reflect who we are and directly impacts the students and communities we serve.

The travel ban wound up in federal court, and President Trump has vowed to take the issue to the Supreme Court, if necessary.

Other concerns addressed in the letter include Trump's stance on climate change; his removal from the White House website of any reference to LGBTQ rights, and conflict of interest posed by Trump's failing to divest himself of his international business holdings.

The educators also called him out on his scathing denunciations of journalists, and disregard of the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of the press.

"President Trump has continued to treat the free press and journalists with contempt," they wrote.

"We condemn his disregard for the First Amendment and the importance of fact-based journalism to our democracy. We condemn his refusal to engage in healthy and honest debate, which is fundamental to the health of this nation, and is the cornerstone of any institution of higher learning."

According to several professors who signed the letter, it came about as the result of debate and discussion on campus among faculty and students about White House policy, in particular the travel ban.

"There were a number of

topics that provoked discussion," said Dr. Lori Weintrob, a professor of history, who founded Wagner's Holocaust Institute.

"For myself," said Weintrob, an Island resident who is raising her family on the North Shore, "the letter speaks to several human rights issues — immigration, the Muslim community, the LGBTQ community — the diversity that makes our Staten Island community stronger, and a good place to live."

Dr. Laura Morowitz, a professor of art history and film studies, who was instrumental in writing the letter and getting it signed by colleagues, said the letter "was motivated by the distress and disappointment that a number of us on the faculty felt upon hearing of the Executive Act and of other recent activities of the Trump administration."

"We wanted to go on

record as opposing these actions, and also to make clear to the wider Staten Island community that we stand with those who are also affected and aghast at Trump's acts since becoming president," she said.

The letter was addressed to Donovan "in the hope that he will understand how these actions affect us, our students and the communities we work with," she said.

Wagner spokesman Lee Manchester said the college supports "all faculty members who choose to constructively express their views."

Earlier, Wagner College President Dr. Richard Guarasci, in a letter to faculty and students that was published on the college website, said the college remains "committed to liberal education, to inclusion, and to equity, and we will continue to spread these values through the work that we do with our students, faculty and staff."

NYU Langone
MEDICAL CENTER

We're in your neighborhood!

NYU LANGONE
ROMANO GYNECOLOGY

At **NYU Langone Romano Gynecology**, we provide high-quality, gynecology services to promote the well-being of women at every stage of life.

We have vast experience in wellness care and expertise in the management of a variety of gynecologic conditions.

Bringing together the comprehensive resources, technology, and expertise of NYU Langone with the physicians you've come to know in your neighborhood.

Maryellen Romano, MD

NYU Langone Romano Gynecology

1110 South Avenue, Suite 306
Staten Island, NY 10314

718.761.4700

nyulangone.org