

Building Bridges of Understanding

Nov. 14, 2016

Dear Campus Community,

Like so many of you, I have been reflecting on last Tuesday's elections. Across our campus and our country, there is much that unites us. But deep divisions exist. We *must* continue to strive to be a community where our embrace of diversity and expression welcomes everyone — of every race and religion, identity and perspective, and party and ideology. We are home to Trump voters and Clinton voters and those who feel marginalized from the political process. So, we *must* — as a campus and community — be a place that respectfully engages in courageous conversations about our differences.

Open, respectful and civil dialogue is valued and essential in these times as it holds the promise of opening up our best capacities for our full humanity. We are our better selves when we use the freedom of expression to build bridges of understanding.

But when freedom is perverted to spread hate, fear and harm — to dehumanize our brothers and sisters in common humanity — then we are all diminished. As a community, we must — and we do — strongly condemn any behavior designed to create a community of hostility, aggression and exclusion for anyone, regardless of identity, race or belief. To that end, those who are motivated by hate and bigotry to create an environment of harassment or threat will be held accountable to the fullest extent possible.

We must strive to be a family that welcomes all and fosters a sense of belonging. Ensuring this requires continued dialogue and ongoing support. After all, we all share in the responsibility of creating and sustaining a community of belonging for everyone. That means respecting everyone's right to their own political belief. That means engaging in civil and candid conversations around differences without resorting to dehumanizing language or behaviors.

Fortunately, there also are many people and resources on our campus in place to provide support to those most impacted and to assist in facilitating respectful dialogue across differences. I encourage all of our students, faculty and staff, if necessary, to utilize services such as:

- **Bias Incident Support Services (BISS)** Bias Incident Support Services are available to any student or employee member of the UK community. No appointment is needed to access support. Walk-ins are welcome. Those seeking services may call 859-257-3189
- **The Bias Incident Response Team** is the official reporting system for students, staff, and faculty to notify the University of instances of hate, racism, bias, and identity-based violence. In addition, as active bystanders, a report to the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) can be made by *anyone who witnesses* incidents or behaviors that threaten safety. Reports can be made [here](#).
- **UK's [Violence Intervention and Prevention Center](#)** provides support for members of our community who have been victimized as well as bystander training. You can call 859-257-3574 for an appointment or to learn more.
- **UK Police Department** 859-257-8573
- **Counseling Center** 106 Frazee Hall, 859-257-8701

- **Community of Concern** Students and employees may file an online report [here](#).
- The [Center for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching](#) provides support and training for faculty, as many of these discussions and debates are taking place in classes, advising sessions and faculty-student teaching moments outside of the classroom.
- The [office of Work-Life Connections Counseling](#) is available for faculty and staff who desire counseling or support.

Thank you for being a community working to ensure a sense of belonging for everyone we welcome to the University of Kentucky.

Eli Capilouto
President