

11-11-16

Colleagues,

I write this letter on behalf of the University Faculty Senate Committee on Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity.

I just returned from our second SUNY-wide diversity conference *Awareness to Action: Building a Culture of Inclusive Excellence*. For many of us, the election results were a discouraging and disheartening way to begin our time together. However, being surrounded by supportive and caring colleagues who have been working hard and long to make significant improvements in higher education, SUNY, our campuses, and most importantly our faculty, staff, and students made these two days and our concerns for the future easier to endure. We knew we were safe and we knew there was someone nearby we could turn to.

As folks checked in with their campuses, we learned that some of our students were not as fortunate as us. Some are scared. Some are confused. And, many are hurting.

More troubling, though, is the fact that across the country and across New York State many individuals—some of them our students—seem to be empowered by Trump's victory and have made their hateful racist, xenophobic, homophobic, and misogynist feelings known.

We cannot stand for this behavior. Campus leaders must act quickly and conscientiously to remove students from our campuses who do not comply with campus rules regarding hate speech and intimidation. Leadership must demonstrate to students that this behavior is unacceptable and has consequences.

President-Elect Trump said "I pledge to every citizen of our land that I will be President for all Americans and this is so important to me." We must hold him to this pledge. But, we must also ensure that those who are not citizens are safe and welcome on our campuses and in our communities.

Governor Cuomo stated in 2015 "that the Empire State is a national leader and a beacon of inclusion for all students." We should take the time to remind ourselves and our students that the majority of people who voted across the country—and, across our state—did not vote for this candidate, his policies, or his hateful and violent rhetoric.

I believe it is our responsibility to encourage a dialogue of diverse political views and to be careful not to suppress or disparage the views we disagree with. This takes time and practice.

Our students need to know they can trust us to listen to their concerns and to treat them in a respectful way, and that our classrooms and campuses are safe and welcoming places.

I encourage you to take the time to reach out to colleagues and remind them that it is our job and our responsibility to care for and educate those who choose to come to our campuses. We also need to stay committed to each other, to appreciate our differences, and to find ways to build a strong foundation of civility and support.

We must stay aware by keeping in touch with our students and each other, and we must act decisively when confronted with hateful, intimidating, or violent behavior. Please share any experiences you have on your campus with your University Faculty Senator, Campus Governance Leader, and/or email me or any of the committee members listed below, so we can document and ensure this behavior is being addressed.

The committee thanks you for your time and your work.

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