

Monday, September 18, 2017 at 7:33 AM Central Daylight Time

Subject: Lawrence Stands Against Hate
Date: Monday, September 18, 2017 at 7:33 AM Central Daylight Time
From: Kimberly A. Barrett
To: STUDENT-L, FACULTY-L, STAFF-L

Dear Lawrentians,

It is my pleasure to join colleagues in welcoming you to the 2017 academic year! I feel extremely privileged to be engaged with you in the important work of making Lawrence more inclusive. And it is times like these, when our cultural wounds are exposed as they were in Charlottesville, in which the significance of our interconnectedness is revealed. It also makes the work that remains to truly achieve 'e pluribus unum' painfully clear. These circumstances compel us to state clearly where we stand. So let me say to you, faculty, students and staff, that Lawrence University stands against hate.

We will adjudicate acts of hate administratively to the full extent legally possible and when warranted refer situations to law enforcement. In addition, we will continue to work diligently to prevent hate from occurring in our campus community. This will be achieved by means of campus education and prevention programs as well as partnerships with the City of Appleton, like the effort this summer that has resulted in additional high definition cameras being placed on College Avenue to help prevent and respond to harassment and other safety concerns.

But what exactly do we mean by acts of hate? We have federal and state statutes describing hate crimes that allow for enhanced sentences when an individual's illegal behavior is motivated by bias against the victim's race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity. The Wisconsin statute also includes national origin and ancestry as categories to consider in these situations. The Southern Poverty Law Center defines hate groups as organizations with "beliefs and practices that malign and attack an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics". However when it comes to defining hate speech, we in the United States have not reached consensus. This has created tension between efforts to provide safe guards to ensure equal access to the "market place of ideas" and the ability to freely participate in it without censorship

Last year Andrew F. Sellars at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society published a paper on the topic, *Defining Hate Speech*. He identified 8 characteristics that most definitions around the world have in common. They include the following: targeting of a group; content that expresses hatred; the speech causes harm; the speaker has bad intentions; the speech incites bad actions; the speech is either public or has a public impact; the context makes violent response possible; and the speech has no redeeming purpose.

When I consider these characteristics in relationship to some of the individuals and groups with whom I disagree most vehemently, I must admit that in most instances they are not engaged in hate. This is so even in the case of national organizations that are radical advocates for free speech in its most absolute form. However, there is no doubt that individuals promoting hate have recently been emboldened and at times transform the noble concept of freedom of expression into a weapon for those who wish to spread ideas that belie the dignity of us all.

But we can take away their ammunition. Not by reacting in kind with hostility and name calling but rather by taking the more productive path of empathy, reasoned debate, compassion, and non-violent protest. And this takes practice. These responses do not come easily in the individualistic, highly competitive society in which we live. But instead result from very intentional, sustained, engaged learning, the type of learning that your experience at Lawrence will provide.

Two cornerstones of these important life skills are self-care and humility. The consistent practice of self-care puts us in a state of mind that allows us to muster the emotional strength to make adaptive decisions in stressful situations. Humility stems from an understanding that we are all in the process of becoming, none of us has all the answers and that any advantage we have is in part due to luck. It helps us practice the art of considerate conduct and to be gentle with ourselves and others as we work together to create a just and equitable campus culture.

The first session in our Cultural Competency Lectures Series provides the opportunity for students, faculty and staff to learn more about self-care. It takes place on September 21 from 11:30-12:30 in the Esch Hurvis Room (225) of the Warch Campus Center.

I also invite you to visit the diversity and inclusion website to read our recently released annual report and additional information about ways you can help make Lawrence more inclusive(<http://www.lawrence.edu/info/offices/diversity-and-inclusion>). I look forward to meeting you around campus, during office hours or at one of my listening sessions.

I will leave you with a quote from my first email to campus last year. It is by bell hooks. I am reminded of the importance of these ideals again today. “We cannot despair when there is conflict. Our solidarity must be affirmed by shared belief in a spirit of intellectual openness that celebrates diversity, welcomes dissent and rejoices in collective dedication to the truth.”

Best wishes for a successful fall term!

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