

From: Academic Affairs Info

Sent: Monday, November 14, 2016 11:42 AM

To: Academic Affairs-College Faculty; Academic Affairs-College Staff; Academic Affairs-Unit Faculty; Academic Affairs-Unit Staff

Cc: Acad-Assoc Deans for Fac Dev; ACAD-AA Council Deans

Subject: A Message to the USF Faculty Concerning Recent Events

Dear Colleagues,

The months leading up to last week's presidential election, and in particular the past few days, have taken a toll on our nation and campus community. There is no denying that the heightened rhetoric witnessed on the campaign trail was divisive and ignited hostility across the country. We must now find the confidence that, collectively, we can work toward restoring a climate of civility, unity and respect for all.

In speaking with students, faculty and staff over the past few days it has become apparent that our academic community is but a microcosm of society. The language, behavior and events witnessed throughout the recent presidential campaign have spilled onto university campuses across America.

Last week we witnessed an incident on our own campus as four students in one of our residence halls became the target of race-based threats. Whether a violation of the law or a breach of the student code of conduct, I consider such actions to be a fundamental affront to our core university values. All students, faculty and staff members regardless of age, disability, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sex, and sexual orientation, deserve to feel safe, welcomed and respected at USF.

Please rest assured that nothing is more important to USF's leadership than the safety and security of all our students, faculty and staff. Both President Genshaft and I visited with the students targeted by last week's graffiti, a meeting was held with members of their residential community, and we immediately implemented additional measures to strengthen security in the residence hall. We continue to engage with members of the USF community, both individuals and groups, as together we work to jointly and constructively address wide-ranging concerns in these challenging times.

We will always work hard to promote the free exchange of ideas, including dissenting viewpoints, a core principle that rests at the very heart of a world class education and student success. Whether one's political beliefs lean right, left or somewhere in between, we must always strive to foster reasoned, civil and even passionate debate inside and outside the classroom. We need your help and support in holding yourselves and others responsible for their words and actions.

Ours is a caring and compassionate university, and one that proudly values diversity and inclusion. Just as we see across the nation, our students and fellow employees may be experiencing a range of emotions from anger, to anxiety, fear, frustration, and even depression. We must reach out and provide comfort and assurance to those in need, especially our students who can find professional support through the USF Counseling Center (<http://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/counseling-center/>) and the USF Center for Victim Advocacy and Violence Prevention (<http://www.sa.usf.edu/advocacy/page.asp?id=72>). Faculty and staff members can find support through USF's Employee Assistance Program (<http://usfweb2.usf.edu/human-resources/eap/index.asp>), and you can report any incidents and/or file a complaint with the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity (<http://www.usf.edu/diversity/forms-policies/>).

Finally, and most important, should you ever feel threatened or unsafe, please do not hesitate to dial 911 in an emergency or contact our University Police Department at (813) 974-2628. Anonymous information can be submitted using USF's Anonymous USFTip line by texting 67283 (*begin your text with "USFTip", and then enter your tip*).

In closing, we care deeply about you and all members of the USF community. I encourage you to reach out to your colleagues in the USF Faculty Senate who are thoughtfully engaged in reflection and constructive conversation around these important matters.

Our days ahead will be challenging, yet I remain confident that USF can become an exemplar of what our nation needs more than anything today, a champion of civility, tolerance for others, along with dignity and respect for all.

I thank you for all that you contribute to USF's academic community.

Ralph

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