

The Cause of Belonging  
Sept. 23, 2016

Members of the University Community,

For too long, news of violence across our country and world has been our constant companion. We cannot help but be shaken by the images we continue to bear witness to.

And many members of our community see such episodes of violence not as a distant tragedy but as a reminder of the vulnerability that comes daily from just being who they are. And they find elusive the comfort and safety too many of us take for granted — because of who we are.

We are not immune to the senseless influences and events that surround us. We will, in time, learn the details of what happened in Columbus, Charlotte, Chelsea, Tulsa, and other places gripped by violence and the consequent anger, fear, and despair. We will try desperately to understand why such things happen. But knowing the reasons will not make easier the difficult road we all must travel toward a stronger sense of community. Never will our institution be in a position to say we have fully overcome all the pain caused by human failings, but with your collective wisdom we can certainly move in the right direction.

We can work together in deciding what happens here within our community. And while we have made progress in constructing a foundation for universal belonging, we still have much left to do in building a community reflective of our highest ideals. We can — and must — be a haven where we can talk with, listen to, and learn from one another in the context of open and honest dialogue, free from rancor and violence.

We recognize the trauma marginalized people and people of color experience in connection to the way their identities show up in this world. Planning is underway for a healing event on our campus on Thursday, September 29, 2016 from 12 pm-1 pm. We will communicate additional information in the coming days about the location.

Please know that you are not alone, and the Office for Institutional Diversity, and other key offices on campus, are available to assist. For those of us who need the space to talk and be heard, we provide professional support through our Bias Incident Support Services at the Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) Center, our Counseling Center, and our Office of Work-Life. And when we see episodes on our campus designed simply to demean and damage members of our community, we must reach out to the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) for assistance and intervention, when appropriate. A list of these resources and important contact information is provided below.

And for those still struggling to understand the depth of anguish in our community caused by these events, I hope that through continuous and courageous dialogue we will all accept that our perspective, shaped by unique experience, is not the only way to view the world. Let us embrace the fundamental human principles of compassion and understanding and the desire to learn from each other.

I spent the spring and summer talking with more than 60 members of our University community and others about our current work in further strengthening the diversity and inclusivity of our

campus. We have achieved a great deal — together — over the last year. There is much to be proud of, but there also is a strong sense of urgency that we must work even harder to build the community of belonging we want. The success of our University family depends on our resolve, pace, and progress.

I also spoke with these and other individuals about the future of our Office of Institutional Diversity. In particular, I solicited advice about the qualities of the next leader of that essential office. The feeling was strong throughout these conversations that we have substantial leadership talent on our campus. And there is importance to having someone already familiar with our campus, our challenges, and our resources.

I have therefore decided to commence an internal search for the next Vice President of Institutional Diversity. I have asked Donna Arnett (Dean of the College of Public Health) and Sonja Feist-Price (Senior Assistant Provost for Faculty Affairs) to serve as co-chairs of the search committee. I will be meeting with the committee soon to discuss our path forward. And we will keep the campus informed.

Lastly, to any student, staff, or faculty member feeling lost, confused, hurt, and unsure about their place here, please know that you belong here at UK and UK belongs to you.

Eli Capilouto  
President

Available resources:

### **Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) Center**

Frazer Hall, Lower Level  
859-257-2884

<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/VIPCenter/>

Advocacy and support services are available to any student, staff or faculty member.

### **Counseling Center**

106 Frazer Hall  
859-257-8701

<http://www.uky.edu/counselingcenter/>

Any fee-paying student enrolled for at least 6 credit-bearing hours at the University of Kentucky can use Counseling Center services.

### **Work+Life Connections Counseling**

859-257-8763

<http://www.uky.edu/hr/work-life/counseling/worklife-connections-counseling>

All faculty, regular staff (FTE 0.50 or greater), spouses, sponsored dependents, unmarried children up to the age of 26 (or older if disabled before the age of 26) and UK retirees are eligible for counseling services.

### **Martin Luther King Center**

313 Blazer Hall

859-257-4130

<http://www.uky.edu/mlkc/>

**Center for Graduate and Professional Diversity Initiatives**

307A Kentucky Clinic

859-257-5196

<http://www.uky.edu/cgpdi/>