

Our Strengths and Values - 2-26-22

Subject: Our Strengths and Values

To the UConn Community:

Our differences are one of our greatest strengths, and inclusion is a core value.

Over the past several days our students have shared, through a rally and reports of bias, that our own community is not immune to acts of hate and injustice, including Islamophobia. Students report hearing slurs on campus, discomfort wearing hijabs, and an unwelcoming attitude toward their faith.

Other students have reported experiencing similar things on our campuses in the past, when they felt they were targeted because of some aspect of their identity.

Broadly, these issues are very personal to me. I was born in a country that no longer exists and many members of my family perished during the Second World War. Many others died during the civil war that raged in the former Yugoslavia, and my parents died as refugees. I know what hate can do. And while the examples I cite above are extreme, they have made me sensitive to any act of bias or hate, especially in our own community. My colleagues here at UConn join me in this.

Last semester, the University formed a Bias Action Group under the leadership of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Division of Student Affairs. The Bias Action Group is a new group that will meet every semester to review our bias data, identify trends and concerns, and create programming and messaging that address the real issues present at UConn.

You may remember Dr. Daugherty and Dr. Tuitt wrote to you during the fall semester reviewing all the bias data shared with the university. In that email, they shared that bias occurs on our campuses and that bias behavior harms and insults members of our UConn community. It also reminds us of the need to care for one another, respect identity, and be a global center for learning and scholarship. We will not let the actions of a few define us.

I am happy to hear that the Bias Action Group received a number of applications and will be meeting in the next few weeks. I look forward to their work and, more specifically, to our community more frequently convening to discuss and explore the harm that hate and intolerance cause at UConn.

To be a great university, we must acknowledge when we have more work to do. We must be an institution that always works to address the impact of hateful acts and value the identity and beliefs of others.

That work continues.

Sincerely,

Radenka

UConn is a great university.

But it's more than that. A top-ranked research institution, with campuses and staff across Connecticut, built to inspire the global community that is UConn Nation. UConn's talented students exceed expectations. Our expert researchers, faculty, and alumni drive Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (CIE) for a better tomorrow. We fuel the State's economy and are committed to benefiting the greater good. **This is UConn.**

STUDENTS FIRST, UCONN ALWAYS. HUSKIES FOREVER.

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