

## Messina Statement of Solidarity and Commitment to Anti-Racism

[Messina](#) is both an office staff of five individuals that oversee the coordination of our first-year living learning program and the faculty, staff, administrators and student leaders that facilitate this experience for our first-year students. This statement reflects the collective commitment of all individuals involved with our program.

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Dear Class of 2024,

You are entering Loyola University Maryland at a time when we as a nation are confronting anti-Black racism, divisive rhetoric, and seeing how historical systems of racism to ensure one racial group maintains power over other racial groups in areas including economics, politics, and culture continue to impart a legacy on how we act and treat each other today. This is not a new problem. The trajectory of American racial injustice started with the colonization of Native American land followed by slavery, segregation, and hyper-policing. We feel the same pain when confronting the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tony McDade, and Ahmaud Arbery, as we did five years ago here in Baltimore with the murder of Freddie Gray. At that time, we responded as a community, including work we specifically did within Messina and with our first-year students. We are growing, learning, and listening to our students but we recognize more must be done.

Messina challenges us to both reflect on our own circles of belonging while also exploring our connection and obligation to those outside of them. In considering the racial injustices and tragedies, past and present, in our nation and on our own campus, we acknowledge our obligation as faculty, staff, and administrators to support you and your peers in your transition to Loyola. This is particularly important for you our first-year students as the newest members of the Loyola community, as participation in Messina offers you an opportunity to form an increased sense of belonging and begin a successful academic career at Loyola.

We commit to taking the following actions which are [described in detail on our website](#):

### **Training and engagement on racial justice topics**

We will [educate ourselves](#), through active, honest participation and engagement in opportunities to explore racial justice and equity, and the lifelong pursuit of living and promoting antiracist action. To support this, the Messina office will offer [expanded trainings, workshops, and resource materials](#) that consider the first-year experience in the context of culturally mindful interdisciplinary approaches.

### **Facilitating educational opportunities in our classes, enrichment sessions, Common Text Program, and programming for you to share in this collective responsibility and accountability in being anti-racist**

In supporting our learning outcome of helping all first-year students experience a sense of belonging to the community at Loyola University Maryland, we commit to holding ourselves and each other accountable in our words and actions in the pursuit of being anti-racist. We will offer educational opportunities in our classes, enrichment sessions, and programming for our students to share in this collective responsibility and accountability to embrace anti-racism. We will use our [common text, Dear America](#), to engage in conversations with each other and with you both during Fall Welcome Weekend and throughout your first year. To support this, the Messina office is expanding upon the existing resources we offer our working groups about how to engage in these topics with you, our first-year students. Messina faculty, staff, and administrators will [address anti-racism within the Messina class and/or enrichment sessions](#). Additionally, we will actively listen to you, our Loyola community, if this commitment is not met.

### **Continued engagement in Baltimore**

We will create opportunities for you and your peers to learn about, explore, and be in community with the city of Baltimore, including providing framework for understanding how historical policies and practices, such as redlining, has continued to oppress our Black community. The Messina office commits to continuing to ensure that there are no barriers to this engagement; partnering with and promoting the work and experiences offered by the Center for Community Service and Justice and our York Road Initiative; and continuing to forge and strengthen partnerships with area museums and theatres.

[The Loyola University Strategic Plan](#), 2017-2022 describes Ignatian citizens as people who "think of themselves as part of something larger, as responsible for the betterment of our shared world; as [people] who think and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed." As you are called to be Ignatian citizens, we also answer this call in our work with you, our first-year students and as members of the Loyola community. We accept that this work challenges us as faculty, staff, and administrators to lean into what may, at times, be uncomfortable. This will not stop us from doing this work.

**WE EMBRACE THIS OPPORTUNITY. WE EMBRACE THIS RESPONSIBILITY. WE EMBRACE YOU.**

Dr. James Snow, Faculty Co-Director, Messina

Mike Puma, Student Development Co-Director, Messina

Mary Ellen Wade, Associate Director, Messina

Emily Poyraz, Assistant Director, Messina

Sarah E. Lewis, Program Assistant for Office of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies and Messina

(Names continue on page 2)

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