

From: Office Of The President <officeofthepresident@loyola.edu>

Date: Friday, November 20, 2015 at 1:13 PM

To: Office Of The President <officeofthepresident@loyola.edu>

Subject: A call to action for our community to address racial diversity and inclusivity

Dear Members of the Loyola Community:

As a campus community, we had many meaningful discussions last year regarding the city of Baltimore in response to disturbing incidences of racial injustice occurring across the country. Last week the discussion turned to our Loyola community as we reflected on how we as individuals and a community live out our mission, including our commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

Last Thursday on the Quad a group of Loyola students led a peaceful and emotional march to raise awareness of racial injustice. In solidarity with the students at the University of Missouri and a number of other college and university campuses across the country, the students prepared a “We Hear You” poster. On it they shared very disturbing and harmful questions and expressions they had heard directed at Loyola students of color. I was out of town that day and unable to attend, but when I returned, I read the poster. These statements included hurtful microaggressions, insensitive statements, uninformed stereotypes, and outright racist statements. Regardless of how any of these statements are categorized, they are simply unacceptable and inconsistent with our mission as a Jesuit, Catholic university committed to educating our students to learn, lead, and serve in a diverse and changing world.

Last Friday, a group of administrators representing the president’s Cabinet, mission-related offices, academic affairs, and student development met with and listened to the students who participated in the student protest on campus. I have had hundreds of discussions over my time here, but this was one of the frankest discussions I have ever had with students—and I am so grateful to them for speaking with honesty and courage. As I listened to the students, I realized that we as a community are not living up to the values that we profess.

The pain inflicted by words and statements that devalue the human spirit are a striking blow to each of us and our community as a whole. This is when our strong truths are not well lived. As the acting president and a longtime member of our community, I am deeply pained by the impact of these insensitivities and injustices on members of our community. While it saddens me, it also motivates me to bring about change in our actions and in our words.

I have spent the week in conversation with academic department chairs, the members of the Green and Grey Society, and members of Cabinet, including our president, the Rev. Brian F. Linnane, S.J., contemplating a course of action and a response to these students who so desperately want the same Loyola experience that so many of us take for granted. Dr. Amy Wolfson and I are also inviting the faculty to meet for a conversation in the next few weeks. All of our students must be embraced for who they are, valued as individual scholars and leaders, and recognized for the many gifts that they bring to the classroom and Loyola community—and to the greater community. Loyola is their home away from home, a place that provides all the support and love that a home and a family provide.

We must work together for change. The time has come—and is long overdue, in fact—for us to come together to discuss and make a plan for how Loyola can confront the longstanding stain of racism, work toward being a stronger community, embrace our values and educational mission. Over the next few days I will be meeting with student leaders and members of the faculty to continue this conversation. In addition, all members of our community are invited to participate in one or more of the conversations about diversity

at Loyola hosted by Sheilah Horton, Ph.D., vice president for student development and dean of students, and the Rev. Timothy Brown, S.J., in the coming weeks. More information on those conversations is [available online](#).

Conversations will not, however, be the solution. We must move toward immediate action and demonstrate that we will not accept anything less than the values we hold dear. As we continue these conversations I will keep you informed on the actions we are taking as a community. Addressing this problem will require a commitment on the part of each member of this community to look inward, to look to one another, to improve our behaviors, to elevate our conversations and to hold one another accountable. We cannot accomplish this alone or without intervention. All of us must commit to giving this our time and attention. We must learn about ourselves and others, about privilege and injustice, and about how we learn anew to embody the values that we espouse to every individual we meet.

Susan M. Donovan, Ph.D.
Acting President