

August 18, 2017

Chancellor's Update: Free Speech and Hatred

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

I had planned on sending everyone a welcome back message next week, offering comments to begin a new school year. However, events occurring over the past week compel me to take a different tack and share this message. Let me unequivocally state that there is no place at UWM for the type of hatred, violence or bigotry we witnessed last weekend. Across our campus community, we have been stunned and horrified by the events in Charlottesville.

At UWM, we have an unwavering commitment to your safety, inclusivity, equity and respect. We educate the most diverse population of any campus in the state—more students of color and veterans than any other Wisconsin campus, and our campus community is further enriched by our first-generation, LGBT+, and non-traditional students. In the face of hatred marching onto college campuses across the nation, it is crucial that we uphold our [Guiding Values](#); especially those that exemplify our commitment to an open, safe and inclusive campus:

- Diversity in all of its definitions, including who we are, how we think, and what we do.
- Pride in our institution, our unique qualities, and our vital role.
- A caring, compassionate, and collegial community characterized by mutual respect and safety.

Part of this inclusivity includes supporting free speech and upholding the First Amendment. As a public university, we will always be a forum for the free exchange of ideas, even if some of those ideas are offensive or repugnant and challenge our thinking in terribly uncomfortable ways. Having said that, we also must recognize the monumental difference between the right of free speech versus the use of violence or other illegal actions to silence, intimidate or hurt others.

As a campus community, we will provide several opportunities in the coming months to explore together the long history and true limits of free speech as well as providing models for engaged, civil discourse. One of those activities is the [Common Read](#), which sparks conversation about important issues of intellectual, social and moral significance. We also are hosting a Freedom of Expression series with an opening event on Sept. 27. Details on these events will be shared with you soon.

There will be opportunities and challenges in our future, including how we choose to communicate in a society with less civility and limited openness to opposing ideas. Free speech is not about yelling over one another when we disagree nor is it about shutting down those with opposing opinions. UWM has a unique opportunity as a university to educate people to rise above the senseless hatred that we have witnessed and to model empathy, awareness and engagement when encountering views different than our own.

I look forward to seeing you all as we begin our new year.

Best regards,

Mark G. Moore