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Unacceptable Racial Behavior

To the WKU Community:

In recent weeks we have experienced two cowardly, heinous acts directed at members of the WKU family – a student and an assistant dean. In both instances the individuals were targeted with hate speech. One incident involved vandalism of personal property and the other involved anonymous letters filled with racial slurs. WKU Police are investigating these cases, and if the perpetrators are found they will be appropriately held accountable for their actions.

However, nothing will erase the damage that these two acts of hatred have done to our university community. We have made strategic efforts to enrich the WKU campus with a diverse population and have emphasized faculty, staff, and student recruitment efforts in ways that add greater racial and cultural diversity to our campus. We have made great progress - outpacing many other universities in the state in the growth of African American student enrollment as well as international enrollment for a number of years. Make no mistake, this effort has been intentional on our part, and we are a better university because of it.

I'm saddened at the vitriol that is dominating the national news cycle each day, and I am disturbed at the point to which civility, tolerance, and respect have diminished in our country. The impact of this national attitude is playing out in communities and on college campuses across the nation, and unfortunately we have begun to see the same here. We will have zero tolerance for actions by any among us at WKU who seek to degrade, discriminate against, or belittle others. However, I would caution all of us not to conclude that these actions by a few are reflective of the whole. They are not.

We have and will continue to deal with these individual acts in an appropriate manner, involving the responsible personnel in EEO, University Police, Student Affairs, and/or others as necessary to ensure that the individuals directly affected by these acts are supported.

In the weeks and months ahead I want to encourage all of us to participate in opportunities to discuss issues of intolerance and the racial tensions that are erupting around us and seek ways to make a positive difference here on our campus. I'm calling on faculty, staff, and student leaders to engage in a concerted effort to elevate the awareness and understanding of these issues. Preparations are underway to host such dialogues and will be announced in due course. I also welcome your individual suggestions as to ways we can best demonstrate that WKU is indeed a place that welcomes and embraces all individuals no matter their background or individual preferences.

Our words are important, but our actions are critical. I call on each of you to act in an appropriate and responsible manner and to demonstrate our commitment as a campus family to a positive and welcoming environment where everyone can be successful.

Gary A. Ransdell



Dr. Gary A. Ransdell | President