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Our Enduring Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

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Our enduring commitment to diversity and inclusion

Dear Campus Community,

Today, families in my childhood neighborhood in Pittsburgh began laying to rest 11 loved ones, gunned down in anti-Semitic hate. Among them is the mother of my childhood friend. These 11 souls who were attacked while attending worship were mothers and fathers, sons and daughters. They were people who contributed a lot to their communities and families.

On behalf of the entire Western Michigan University community, I extend our deepest sympathies. We stand in unity with those in Pittsburgh and around the globe who grieve because of this senseless act.

This attack is not isolated. It joins a disconcerting and growing list of hate-filled violence: bombs in the mail, shootings at grocery stores, attacks on baseball fields, attacks at houses of worship and cars in crowds. The Anti-Defamation League is reporting a historic rise in anti-Semitic incidents. If we know anything, it is that we must all remain vigilant against the persistence of hate and the violence it breeds.

Western Michigan University, like so many institutions, is dedicated to critical thinking, reasoning, creative expression and advancing the frontiers of knowledge, all with the purpose of making the world a better place. We are responsible for more than just academic and career preparation. It is our duty to challenge the campus community to engage with perspectives different than their own in order to develop intellectual curiosity and global literacy. Disagreement and debate in pursuit of truth, knowing, and better solutions are at the heart of the University. But not more so than embracing every person's humanity with dignity and respect. Safety, decency and non-violence are bedrock values of not just the academy but of a functioning and prosperous society.

The shooting in Pittsburgh has affected me in a personal way. And the growing vitriol in our national discourse touches each of us personally. We all have a responsibility to do our part to create an environment where "all may learn." This is not negotiable.

Today, let us once again stand resolute in our longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion, to our fundamental belief in the worth of all human beings no matter their race, religion, political persuasion, gender expression, sexual orientation or ability. It is our differences that strengthen the weave of our human tapestry. Efforts to threaten, demean or degrade one of us is an assault against our whole community and will not go unchallenged.

I encourage us to reflect on how we can best see the humanity in others. Welcome discussion, even when perspectives diverge. Seek to honor and include, especially those whom you don't fully understand. Disagree agreeably. Consider the value of community and the value of each and every person and perspective in building it.

Together, we can honor those who were slain in this tragedy by making sure this world embraces everyone.

Sincerely,

Ed Montgomery
President
Western Michigan University