August 16, 2017

To the campus community:

As an institution of higher learning, but more importantly, as a collection of individuals committed to democracy, we place a high value on the ideals of freedom of speech and peaceable assembly. At SUNY Potsdam, we encourage civil discussion and engagement in discourse, and we believe that a wide range of viewpoints strengthens us as a community.

The acts of hatred that we — and the world — saw in Charlottesville, Virginia, represent none of those values.

The violent and hateful events that occurred over the weekend in Charlottesville are difficult and painful for all of us committed to a more equitable and inclusive society. Like many, I am appalled by the hatred, bigotry and violence used to intimidate and terrorize a peaceful community, and the resurgence of neo-Nazi and white supremacist hate groups.

History has shown us that in times like these, we must reaffirm the values that we as a nation hold so dear — the values of democracy, mutual respect and decency — which these hateful actions fly in the face of.

As we get ready to welcome our students back to campus, I want to remind you of our commitment to providing a safe, supportive learning environment for all. As expressed in the Potsdam Pledge, SUNY Potsdam is committed to fostering a community where diversity and inclusion are encouraged and respected, and where we remain alert to the threats posed by hatred, intolerance and other injustices.

As you keep recent events in your thoughts, I would ask you to be mindful of the array of life experiences of members of our community and be sensitive to the needs of our students, friends and colleagues. I encourage you to look carefully at the Potsdam Pledge and join me in committing yourself to the ideals expressed in it.

As the days and weeks unfold, you will be hearing more from me and others in the campus community, including our Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Bernadette Tiapo, about campus responses and resources. For now, please hold the date for our first community check in, on September 7. Additionally, I would like to share with you the message from SUNY Chairman H. Carl McCall and Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher, which can be found on the SUNY website.

Sincerely,

Kristin G. Esterberg, Ph.D.
President, SUNY Potsdam

Confidential services are available for students who are feeling the effects of recent events through the Counseling Center: (http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/counseling)
If you witness or hear of bias-related incidents and/or hate crimes, you are encouraged to speak out and to tell someone about it. There are many reporting options, including confidential options, on campus. Please refer to the resource links below.

- Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (http://www.potsdam.edu/diversity)
- Center for Diversity (http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/diversity)
- Bias Incident Response Team (http://www.potsdam.edu/about/diversity/biasresponse)
- University Police Department (http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/safety)
- Student Conduct Office (http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/studentconduct)
- Title IX Office (http://www.potsdam.edu/offices/hr/titleix)
- Residence Life (http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/ResHalls)

Faculty and staff who are in need of support can turn to the campus Employee Assistance Program: http://www.potsdam.edu/faculty/eap