

Transcript: A Video Message to the University Community

Thursday, November 17, 2016

My messages to you usually involve newsworthy events or achievements by our university community. And last week I sent an electronic message regarding unfolding events in our country. Today I want to share some personal thoughts.

Over the past several days, I have reflected on the concerns that some of you have expressed to me about your future on our campus and in the broader community. Some of you are wondering how you now fit in, and some of you have told me that you are scared.

It would be disingenuous for me to say that I know what you are going through. But I can tell you, that there were times when growing up in the segregated South of the 1950s and 60s that I, too, was frightened and sought assurances that sometimes were impossible to provide. But my family encouraged me to maintain hope and be resilient, which has proved to be some of the wisest counsel during times of insecurity.

I cannot tell you how events will play out in the coming months. I wish I could provide assurances that would cover the anxiety you might be feeling, but that is beyond the reach of a university president — or any president.

But I can promise you this: As members of our university community — our university family — we are focused on your well-being. Our commitment to your success is manifested every day in your relationships with your friends, faculty, staff and administrators. If you are not sure where to turn, reach out and you will discover both informal and formal support networks. We will also redouble our efforts to connect with you.

Ours is a broadly diverse and inclusive community, open to an array of backgrounds, experiences and expressions of beliefs. And like all families, we understand that we will not always see life through the same lens, but we continue to honor, respect, and value each other's perspective and point of view.

So, as we approach the holiday season, I want to express my continued gratitude for being able to serve as your president, and to be part of this great university family. It is during the difficult times that our bonds — that is, the many things that unite, rather than divide us — are so necessary.

Know that Ron and I wish all of you the best of health, happiness and peace!