

Subject: Critical Conversations

Date: Wednesday, January 21, 2015 at 12:00:24 PM Central Standard Time

From: Office of the President Mail (sent by Jeanine Hornish Rakow (jhrakow) <jhrakow@memphis.edu>)

To: All Faculty Staff and Students

As we begin a new semester, I want to share some thoughts with you. I am struck each and every day by the diversity of our campus and how profoundly this campus enriches our lives and community. I want to take this opportunity to let you know how much I appreciate the uniqueness and creativity that each and every one of you bring to our campus and the City of Memphis. I believe that we are all blessed to be a part of this tremendous university and that, by virtue of our interactions and relationships with people who are often very different than ourselves we are able to expand our horizons and experience a richer life. However, the midst of our very busy lives, it is often difficult to let others know that they are valued, that they are safe, and that they are appreciated on our campus.

Events in Ferguson and New York, along with a number of violent episodes on university campuses around the country, have focused attention on a range of issues critical to our democratic, civil society. Despite assurances in our Constitution, issues of freedom, prejudice, equity and fairness continue to reverberate on our campus, in our community and across our county. The University of Memphis is in a unique position to weigh in and offer leadership. Our unique history and mission, coupled with the intellectual capital available on our campus, make us a natural leader on such critical conversations. Accordingly, I'm asking our Provost, in coordination with our own Hooks Institute, to examine the best format for hosting a campus conversation on these critical issues. I would like to see us become a national leader for these initiatives and for us to serve as a model for colleges and universities across the country. The hope is that this conversation will inform our university policies related to violence, diversity and equality.

I wish you all well for the spring semester.

Warm Regards,



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