

A Message of Support and Solidarity | November 16, 2015

“I am only one. But still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do something that I can do.”

– Edward Everett Hale (1902)

Late last week, UM-Flint students stood in the cold and drizzle out front of the University Pavilion, in solidarity with the student from the University of Missouri and Yale. They also shared their fatigue, pain, and disappointment about the on-going acts of oppression that are present in their everyday interactions.

Since then, horrific acts of violence have unfolded in Paris and Beirut. Our hearts go out to the families who lost love ones and to the families who are beginning to experience backlash as a result of their real (and perceived) ethnicity.

At UM-Flint, one of our strengths is our diversity. I hear people talk weekly about how important our campus diversity is to them. Yet our national and international students, as well as faculty and staff, report experiences intentional and unintentional that marginalize them. We must continue to find ways to move beyond the conceptual ideas of diversity and inclusion, to create an environment that truly supports each individual.

It is up to each of us to create an inclusive community. In short, to create a community in which everyone’s contribution is welcome, a community that provides space for difference and works with students, faculty, and staff to develop the skills to really work and grow across the difference. While we will continue the institutional work of assessing climate and exploring systemic issues/policies that may privilege some and not others, we know it is the day-to-day interactions -- the exchanges between us as community members -- that build a welcoming climate committed to the success of each person.

I often hear people wonder about how to make a difference, such as how to

enhance the development of our cultural competency. Most of the time, we are not conscious of the ways in which our interactions with others shape our culture. These are discussions worth our on-going attention. However a first step is to be aware of the impact of our actions on others and to ask ourselves what kind of space we are creating for different perspectives, ideas, and behaviors. The practices of listening and respectful exchange are what ultimately changes the world.

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. describes us as being “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality...whatever effects one directly, affects all indirectly.” He goes on to say until you are all you can be, I will never be all that I can be. I sincerely believe that working together we can create a rich learning environment that makes space for the success of all.

Sincerely,
Sue