



Erik Eisele <erik.eisele@maine.edu>

The University of Everyone

1 message

USM President <usm.president@maine.edu>
To: USM-CURRENT-S@lists.maine.edu

Thu, Dec 12, 2019 at 9:05 AM

Dear USM Community,

Last Thursday I attended a lecture in Hannaford Hall by Richard Rothstein on his book *The Color of Law* about the deliberate segregation of Americans through housing. The day before national expert Paul Gorski was in the same room presenting an analysis of the racial and economic inequities in America's classrooms. A day later I was in Payson-Smith as a group of students, staff, faculty and administrators worked on a plan to strengthen USM curriculum in regards to race and equity, and down the hall more students, staff, faculty and administrators attended a Racial Equity Institute workshop outlining the history, foundations and legacy of American racism.

These lectures, meetings and workshops represent Goal 10 in action, USM's deliberate effort to engage on questions of equity and justice. But we still need to do more. As a community, we need to discuss the complexities of these issues right here, at USM.

This coming semester Provost Uzzi and IDAC will be organizing a series of forums to discuss Ibram Kendi's book *How to be an Antiracist*, as well as listening sessions and discussions about our community and how we can best face issues of discrimination and marginalization. These forums will be a space for us all and an opportunity to build a shared understanding of our community and our university.

We do, after all, face our own challenges. Over Thanksgiving break our community confronted a situation involving a social media image. VP of Student Life David Roussel responded immediately, stating that as the University of Everyone USM stands against any and all forms of discrimination and racial hatred. I write to reiterate David's statement: USM is dedicated to everyone's right to be safe, welcomed, respected and equitably supported in their pursuit of education.

USM, like all of America today, finds itself needing to negotiate tense discussions about structural racism, historic oppression, and privilege. These conversations could risk turning into shouting matches, or stay starved of the space necessary for true democratic discourse. But our aim is to build a container capable of holding all the complexity, as well as to educate citizens capable of these difficult discussions. "The University of Everyone" means facing the historical realities of colonization, racism and other oppressions directly, and charting a path forward that welcomes everyone. Our door is open to every student, whether they be Indigenous, a Student of Color, LGBTQ+, disabled, or someone frustrated, threatened and uncomfortable in these discussions. Learning is often challenging, but it is something we can do together. USM has space for this, and our community is strong enough to host this conversation.

Striking the right balance will at times be hard. But our ability to navigate these discussions represents both the heart of democracy, and the heart of a university. Your voice matters. As part of our university, your voice makes us better. We need you to build, and we want to build with you -- every student, staff and faculty member of this institution. In fact, this message itself was formed with the powerful input and

direction of IDAC fellows, graduate student Erik Eisele and honors director Rebecca Nisetich. My gratitude is enormous.

As the University of Everyone grows from an ideal into a reality, we expect the work ahead will be at times messy and uncomfortable. Thank you again for joining us on this powerful, challenging and beautiful journey.

g

--

Dr. Glenn Cummings
President

University of Southern Maine
120 Masterton Hall
[71 Bedford St.](#)
[Portland, ME 04104](#)
Office: 207.780.4480
Cell: 207.838.7705

Confidentiality Notice:

The material transmitted herein is intended only for the use of the addressee and may contain information that constitutes work product or is confidential and exempt from disclosure under applicable law. Distribution or copying of this communication or reliance upon its contents by unauthorized participants is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify us immediately by telephone or e-mail.

