



December 2, 2015

To: Campus Community

We enter the holiday season wishing peace to all but realizing that the world is anything but peaceful. Acts of terror and the cultural divisions, fear, and social distancing they spawn are prominent globally. On the home front, we are experiencing racial and ethnic tensions in many cities and towns. At colleges and universities, we hear calls for affirmation, respect, and equal opportunity across the many groups that comprise a campus community.

It is tempting to put one's head down and go about one's business during such troubled times. In fact, that natural inclination counters the very spirit and role of a college campus. Conversations should happen here. They should help us make sense of what is occurring beyond our walls. They should also encourage introspection and serious discussions about what occurs within our walls.

California State University, Stanislaus prides itself on being a welcoming and inclusive campus whose members are persons rather than numbers. The University plays a significant role in providing access and opportunity to families in pursuit of the American dream. We are a generous community looking always to give to those in need. We pride ourselves on looking out for each other. We engage issues ranging from sexual assault to alcohol awareness to protecting sensitive personal information as everyone's issues because everyone's welfare matters.

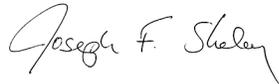
It is precisely because of who we are – welcoming to all, advancing opportunity for everyone, ready to step forward for those in need – that I invite you now to examine whether we can do better. Is access to opportunities within our campus equally open to all? Do all segments of our campus community feel welcomed, valued, and integral? If the answers to these questions counter what we expected, what does a university whose members truly look out for each other do about it?

We will return from semester break in late January. Let us designate February as a month of campus conversation about advancing inclusivity while we champion diversity. I have asked the Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity to organize and facilitate this effort. I would

hope too that the Academic Senate and Associated Students, Inc. address the issue at hand formally at one of their meetings during February. Finally, my hopes for this conversation include the development of action steps toward expanding our notion of the meaning of "welcome" and "inclusive."

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to launching the spring 2016 semester with an important dialogue about who we are and who we hope to be.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph F. Sheley".

Joseph F. Sheley, President
California State University, Stanislaus
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