

November 16, 2016

To the UConn Community,

As the week draws to a close and many prepare to leave campus for the holiday break, I write to wish everyone a restful and happy Thanksgiving.

We have much to be thankful for here at UConn.

There are a number of students who will be remaining on campus next week, including many international students. In advance of the holiday, UConn Dining Services prepares a special Thanksgiving dinner for our students, allowing them to enjoy a great meal with friends and classmates at no cost to them, in the spirit of the holiday.

Dinner is also served to those members of UConn's police and fire departments who must be on duty and away from their families on Thanksgiving Day. We owe a deep thanks to them and to the many UConn Dining Services employees who make this dinner possible.

We are an academic institution, but we are also a community. One that lives and breathes its values each day. We are deeply thankful for each, including: freedom of speech and expression, diversity and inclusion, compassion and respect.

We are thankful that we are the kind of university that works to reflect those values in all our interactions with others, no matter their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socioeconomic background. Or their citizenship. When enrolling students, we consider their academic qualifications, not their immigration status. That has been and will continue to be true, reflecting both our values and the laws of the state of Connecticut.

UConn is a large university, but one small community in a vast nation that is intensely polarized.

On our campuses and across the country, the results of last Tuesday's election have left some pleased and hopeful while others are disappointed and fearful. A number of questions have been raised by members of our community regarding possible changes in public policy resulting from the election, and the effect that could have on our students, particularly those who are undocumented. I have asked the appropriate university offices to respond to inquiries that have been received and assemble information that may be relevant and helpful to our students.

Whatever your reaction to this or any election, I urge all in our community to embrace your passions and pursue the causes and work that are important to you.

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At our great university, we work every day to solve problems, advance understanding, and serve communities, across all disciplines. My own academic field is political science and we know that elections are won and lost and public policy is made based largely on the hard work of active populations – those who engage in the political process and with their elected representatives on the local, state, and federal level. That is what our representatives are there for.

As emeritus Professor Bruce Stave chronicled so well in his history of the university, there is a long tradition of activism and engagement at UConn over decades. This tradition of active citizenship remains today on our campuses. It also extends to the nation and the world around us.

Once again, I wish you all the best and a very happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Susan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Susan Herbst