

November 19, 2014

To the University Community,

As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, I wanted to take a moment to wish you well. Next week, many students will be away for a week-long break before returning to complete coursework and begin final exams, ending another fall semester. It is a well-deserved rest; yet for those of us who work here, seeing the students depart is always bittersweet, as it is the students who make our campuses as vibrant and lively as they are. It is why universities are such special and unique places to live, work and learn.

But campuses are, unfortunately, not immune from the difficult issues that affect every community at times, and UConn is no exception. Many of you may be following the ongoing discussion related to a dispute that took place on the Storrs campus at the end of September which involved some members of two Greek letter organizations – Pi Kappa Alpha and Alpha Kappa Alpha – and others. It is alleged that what began as a disagreement between students escalated into an ugly verbal confrontation that included insults based on race and gender

These are serious allegations that the university continues to thoroughly investigate, as it should. There is no room for hateful speech or incivility on our campuses. In addition, I am appalled by the comments being made anonymously through social media directed at Alpha Kappa Alpha and other members of our community. I will be meeting with the student leaders of Greek letter organizations in the coming weeks to discuss the broad issues raised during a November 10 town hall meeting in connection with what took place in September.

It is important that our community know that UConn students, faculty, and staff share a responsibility – year-round – to reinforce the values of diversity, civility, and respect that are so important to us.

“Civility” is a term that is used so often on campuses that we need to ensure that its meaning does not become diluted or lost. For all of us who live and work here, it is a very real thing, and something we aspire to make part of our daily lives. If there is anywhere that true civility can thrive, it is a university. It is up to all of us to make these values a reality.

Once again, I hope you are able to enjoy a restful and pleasant holiday next week as we look forward to the remainder of the semester – and ongoing discussion.

Sincerely,



Susan Herbst