



**To Our Beloved Community**

Dear OAAA Family,

This weekend we experienced directly the resurgence of a racial hatred that, until recently, cowered in the shadows of our past. Racial hatred, though at times not seen, has always been linked to violence and deadly outcomes. On Friday, August 11<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, members of the Ku Klux Klan, the Alt-Right and other white supremacists groups, with their silent and outspoken allies, encroached upon our beloved community of learning and attacked us and our sensibilities.

In the months leading up to this past weekend, we were never naive to dismiss the reality that history repeats itself. Like many others, the tragedy of these last days, has left us outraged. Yet, we are not surprised! In spite of our anticipation of violent repetitions, we could not have determined the form and the force with which the hatred was demonstrated at the University and in Charlottesville.

As advocates, we are aware that hatred can be deadly. Messaging around fear is consistently clear in the propaganda of hate groups. We don't always remember; however, the cost of taking a stand for what you believe, too, can end in the ultimate sacrifice. We have suffered both of these aspects of death and injury to members of our beloved family and community. We mourn with you.

This weekend, our entering and returning students, faculty & staff will arrive. Every year, we stand ready to embrace our returning students with the love of the years of experience of helping students succeed despite adversity. This year will be no different.

We, the Office of African-American Affairs, are processing these events, thinking deeply and planning ahead in ways that benefit all of our students who will soon arrive. Given our history and the lessons that we have learned over time, we stand focused and urge circumspection, vigilance and preparation in our engagements with others.

We have received invitations for collaborations from many avenues and are making sustained connections to support us and to protect our students. Parents, be assured that we are taking the necessary measures to make ourselves available to your sons and daughters. A website is being developed that will outline specific plans of action. In the meantime, please take the opportunity, before your students arrive, to discuss how they can make informed decisions about engaging in civic action. There will be many resources made available to them. Together, you can help them make decisions that reflect your family's values and, in turn, you can stay informed about their commitments to civic engagement and action.

Now, as much as ever, we urge our new and returning students to take advantage of all available programs, to enable them to think and look ahead, so that we can minimize the impact of such senseless loss on their student experience. New and current faculty and staff can also join us in creating a community that will feel like home for all of us.

On Saturday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, we invite you to attend our annual Welcoming Reception at 3:30 pm at Ern Commons (in the first-year dormitory area) and to embrace the newest members of our community.

In solidarity,

Deans Apprey, Grimes, Bassett, Mason & the OAAA staff