



May 13th, 2016

An Open Letter to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Campus Community:

The faculty and staff of the Department of Counseling Psychology in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison stand together in making a public statement regarding incidents of hate speech and action that have occurred on campus recently. We are writing this letter with the hope that the University acts swiftly and with a sense of urgency. There have been many such incidents rooted in hate and bias, and we were particularly troubled by the arrest of Denzel McDonald in a UW classroom on April 14th, interrupting the educational mission of the university. The values and mission of the University include strengthening cultural understanding and thinking through the implications of institutional and political policies for individuals and groups. We strive to embody, through UW's policies and programs, respect for and commitment to the ideals of a pluralistic, multiracial, open and democratic society. Given these premises, we believe that the leadership at the University of Wisconsin-Madison can respond to this incident in a manner befitting this educational mission.

In addition to the broader mission of the University, the Department of Counseling Psychology embodies a mission to uphold dignity and respect for the teacher, the student, and the consumer of professional psychology. Unfortunately, events on campus and the tone of the national political conversation create a climate that is adverse to this mission. We have read letters from other departments that focus on the historical and political implications of Denzel's arrest and agree that this event (amongst a myriad of others that have occurred recently) and a lack of a strong and swift response, only sustains the trend toward increasing race-based intolerance.

We agree with the views of others on campus who are standing in solidarity with Denzel, Dr. Johanna Almiron, and students, staff, and faculty of color, as well as members of other marginalized groups on campus. In addition, we offer a perspective that is not primarily rooted in history or politics. Our department was founded on the notion that all individuals have the right to and thrive within psychologically stable, healthy, and affirming environments. Our students are trained to foster well-being and improve mental health for individuals within the Madison community and beyond. We can teach our students how to implement techniques that address depression, anxiety, adjustment, amongst other mental health issues. These events point to how we as counselors and counseling psychologists, and as a campus community, need to attend to the health of institutions and social systems as a precondition for the psychological health of the

Department of Counseling Psychology

University of Wisconsin-Madison 1000 Bascom Mall Madison, Wisconsin 53706

608/262-4807 Fax: 608/265-3347 E-mail: counpsych@education.wisc.edu www.counselingpsych.education.wisc.edu

individuals participating in those institutions and systems.

To our students, it is imperative for us to let you know that we will do everything in our power to support your learning and to create classroom spaces where we can try to deconstruct power and privilege as a means to dismantle institutional racism and bias. It has become clear to us that the hurt, pain, and trauma are not only impacting the clients you see—they are also deeply impacting the students of color, students from other marginalized groups, and their allies in our department and therefore our department as a whole. We will take the events on campus as a stimulus to ensure that we are providing as much support to you as possible, but also engaging in our mission of social justice and being activists on campus and within our communities.

To the university administration, we want to express our concern that the actions taken so far have not addressed the racist events occurring on campus. In previous letters that have been written to the university, it has been acknowledged that there has been a deep commitment by the university to improving the racial climate on campus—but that there has not been any amount of measurable or distinguishable improvement. We appreciate the Chancellor's Spring 2016 initiative to solicit proposals to address campus climate issues, and we recognize that our discipline and our faculty and students in particular have specific expertise that can address critical needs for improving campus climate at UW. Counseling psychology faculty have submitted or collaborated on the following proposals, submitted in response to the Chancellor's call:

- Community support for students most affected by recent events. In collaboration with other campus groups (including Counseling and Consultation Services), we aim to expand services offered through the Counseling Psychology Training Clinic (currently offered to First Wave participants) to support students and groups whose sense of belonging and well-being have been directly or indirectly affected by these events.
- Diversity training initiative. We support the Chancellor's Moving Wisconsin Forward initiative to provide mandatory diversity training for incoming students. MWF will be piloted this fall, and is ultimately expected to include 8,000 students per year, as well as faculty and staff. Our department is involved in the design and implementation of these trainings.
- House Fellows training. To build on the above initiative, we will collaborate with the Division of University Housing to offer training during Spring 2017 for future House Fellows related to awareness of climate issues, pedagogy of difficult dialogues, and cultural awareness and competence.
- Diversity Dialogues. We will continue to offer and expand the scope of Diversity Dialogues, which currently serve over 500 students per year. Our goal is to begin training undergraduate students, who can serve as co-facilitators with CP graduate students to expand participation, both as an adjunct learning option for existing 'e' classes and as a forum for bringing students into dialogue around perceptions of difference and otherness in other campus contexts.
- CP 225: Coming to Terms with Cultural Diversity: Invitation to Dialogue. Professors Gloria and Uttal piloted this class in Fall 2015 and offered it again in Spring 2016. CP 225

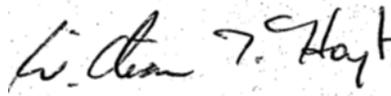
represents a more extended opportunity for students to explore issues of similarity and difference, building self-awareness, knowledge, and skills for communicating in diverse social contexts. We commit to continuing to develop and expand access to this class, seeking resources to enhance the planned on-line only offering (Summer 2016), to provide an alternative forum for learning and skill development.

We are fully invested as faculty and staff in the notion that diversity on campus is vital to UW's educational mission and in maintaining our standing as a world class university. We are committed to contribute to efforts to repair the damage and distrust that have emerged in recent months, working toward the goal of a campus where students of all identities and social statuses feel welcome and valued. We further commit to going beyond damage control to promote a vision of diversity education for a diverse society as a critical mission for a 21st century university, both within and outside the classroom. We commit to the projects described above, and to continue to work with other departments, with campus partners, and with campus and college administrations to actualize the vision of UW as an institution offering "limitless opportunities for academic growth" for all of its students.

Signed,
The Faculty and Staff of the Department of Counseling Psychology



Stephanie Budge, Assistant Professor



William Hoyt, Professor and Chair



Lynet Uttal, Professor



Alberta Gloria, Professor



Corissa Lotta, Faculty Associate



Carmen Valdez, Associate Professor



Stephanie Graham, Clinical Associate Professor



Stephen Quintana, Professor



Bruce Wampold, Wollat Professor of Counseling Psychology



Shira Hand, Department Administrator



Susan Thideman, Student Services Coordinator