

Nov. 9, 2016

To the Campus Community,

Yesterday was an emotional day for all in the United States as we went to the polls to elect our next president. There is no question that this most recent political season has revealed some of the deep political and cultural divides that exist within our country. One of the characteristics of educated persons is that they do not fear differences, but rather are curious about such differences; they seek to understand the perspectives of others. Frostburg State is a community of caring individuals committed to making this world a better place.

In response to the election results, graffiti has started showing up on campus. This graffiti is creating anger and feelings of intimidation, regardless of whether that was its intent. We appreciate the efforts that many of our students have made to remove the graffiti, and we recognize efforts to replace them with more positive messages. However, we will continue to remove all graffiti so that we are not placed in the position of judging the content of any of these messages. We respect everyone's right to free speech, but please do not let our beautiful campus become that canvas.

The diverse community that we have created here will continue. People will always disagree with one another, and we will disagree over important, crucial, life-changing things. We must not let our disagreements feed anger and fear, nor should we tolerate those who would stoke division rather than seek understanding. We are all committed to making certain that everyone on our campus, regardless of their race, religion, class, sexual orientation, or political beliefs feels both welcome and safe. None of us should view any member of this community as "the other."

I offer the words of our political leaders for your reflection:

President Obama: *"Everybody is sad when their side loses an election, but the day after we have to remember that we're actually all on one team. This is an intramural scrimmage. We're not Democrats first. We're not Republicans first. We are Americans first. We're patriots first."*

"We all want what's best for this country. That's what I heard in Mr. Trump's remarks last night. That's what I heard when I spoke to him directly. And I was heartened by that. That's what the country needs – a sense of unity, a sense of inclusion, a respect for our institutions, our way of life, rule of law, and respect for each other."

Donald Trump: *"Now it is time for America to bind the wounds of division. Have to get together. To all Republicans and Democrats and independents across this nation, I say it is time for us to come together as one united people."*

"It is time. I pledge to every citizen of our land that I will be President for all of Americans, and this is so important to me. For those who have chosen not to support me in the past ... I'm reaching out to you for your guidance and your help so that we can work together and unify our great country."

"... We will seek common ground, not hostility; partnership, not conflict."

Hillary Clinton: *"I count my blessings every single day that I am an American, and I still believe, as deeply as I ever have, that if we stand together and work together with respect for our differences, strengthen our convictions, and love for this nation, our best days are still ahead of us."*

"Because, you know, I believe we are stronger together and we will go forward together."

I leave you with the words of wisdom from Senator J. William Fulbright:

"Understanding between the peoples on this planet is only possible when differences of culture and outlook are respected and appreciated rather than feared and condemned, when the common bond of human dignity is recognized as the essential bond for a peaceful world."

We are stronger together, and we are wiser when we listen.

Sincerely,

Ron Nowaczyk

P.S. As you may be aware, United Campus Ministry had previously planned a Unity and Peace Prayer Vigil this evening at 8 at Frostburg United Methodist Church, 48 W. Main St. Chaplain Cindy Zirlott will set aside some time to both offer and seek prayers to heal divisiveness. See here for more information: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CwwnIVvUQAEHWR.jpg:large>