

# Message from the President

An open letter to our Sycamore family,

The past two weeks have been devastating for our society. They have been equally devastating for our campus community. What are the right words? What are the right emotions? What are the right messages? Can any of these be “right” at a moment like this in our history? I don’t think so. If we strip away titles, job descriptions, org charts, and planning lists, what are we then left with? We are a community of people who have come together to teach, learn, and discover at this university. That is what we call our core mission. Yet words like “core mission” do not adequately speak to the critical concept that we are “people who have come together” at Indiana State University.

To my black colleagues and particularly our black students for whom the pain and rage have been all consuming, whatever the “right” words are for your emotions, they are not only right, they are righteous. Above all else one must speak what is in one’s heart. Sometimes there is no substitute for crying out, and this is that time. Your campus family is here with you and your voice is heard. You do not cry out alone. Our society must change and we must do this together.

I have hesitated to say words like this because there has been so much criticism over what words have been used and what words have not been used, or whose words they are. I have come to the conclusion that no words will be satisfying to everyone, but words must be shared. As I have reached out to connect with my colleagues here and at other institutions, as well as those who have been a part of my life in other ways, to check in and offer comfort to them, their recurring message to me has been to speak your heart. Today, these are my words. No one else is writing them with me or for me. I am writing now to say what is in my heart . . . you do not suffer alone. You do not stand alone.

I am infuriated to say that in my life and career this social crisis we are living through is regrettably too familiar. That is essentially why this time it is wrought with such anguish. Where do we go? What do we do? How do we change our society? What is the next step that takes us from this paralyzing moment to restorative action? When I cannot get past a paralyzing moment, I look for next actions. This is my call to action to all of us today.

As a campus family, it is time to start in motion the wheels of change. We have to do something about this crisis in our society. We are an educational institution with a purpose to teach, learn and discover. We are asking each of you to do your part to mobilize this great organization by planning for the time when our campus comes alive again this fall. This abnormal social isolation we have endured since March will thankfully end, and that is so essential for our collective campus community’s health and well-being. We are meant to be together and work together.

To move from pain to action, it is time to start our work. The university website will soon have a spot where projects in progress to bring us back together around this call to action will be listed. Our faculty, staff and students will be reaching out to engage us in these next steps. We must step up.

We need to listen . . . we need to share . . . we need to engage our students in action that prepares them to go out into society when they graduate and be the change this country needs so desperately now. Please join our campus in this effort. Please be a part of this intentional effort to turn indignation into impact, to turn frustration into consequence, and to turn pain into reconciliation. Our Indiana State University community can do nothing less, and we must do a great deal more.

Joining you in action,



Deborah J. Curtis, Ph.D.  
President

