

Students,

The events of the past week were challenging ones for our campus community which brought to light deep fissures within the fabric of our institution that were previously hidden. If you are unfamiliar with the events that transpired last week, they are detailed in articles by [The Washington Post](#), [the Associated Press](#), [Delmarva Now here](#) and [here](#), and the SU [Flyer](#).

As Department Chair, I have spent considerable time last week listening to students' concerns, and engaging in discussion with both our students and faculty members across the campus community. The concerns that students brought forth both at the impromptu forum on Monday 11/4, as well as the structured forum on Tuesday 11/5, are legitimate, extend far beyond the immediate concerns regarding the university's handling of the incident, and must be taken seriously and addressed. I see you, I hear you, and I am with you in the call to address these issues.

In his 1967 speech to the American Psychological Association Convention, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. admonished psychologists for their inaction on social issues, and encouraged them to directly get involved in the pressing social issues of the time. As your Department Chair, I believe the call to action spoken by Dr. King over 50 years ago holds true today: psychologists should be among those leading the way towards engaging in these issues. Our discipline has much to say on these issues; the time for platitudes is over, and now is the time for action.

As Chair of the Department, I am developing an Ad-Hoc Committee to address structural issues and practices which contribute to the marginalization of our Black students, other students of Color, and all groups of students on our campus who are marginalized due to their race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, disability status, being LGBTQ+, or because of other socio-localities. The committee is specifically charged with identifying practices in our department which contribute to student marginalization and in implementing, under my leadership, structural change across all ecological levels to remove barriers for our students. This includes both short- and long-term action items. With changes, we can do our part as psychologists to create a culture that is not tolerant of hate.

To that end, I am reaching out to ask students for help on this journey. I am looking for students who are willing to serve on this committee alongside our faculty. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please email me directly by November 15th. Time is of essence, and I'd like to organize quickly.

Psychologist Dr. John Gardner, who helped engineer and administer some of the Great Society programs of the 1960s, once famously said, "What we have before us are some breathtaking opportunities disguised as insoluble problems." This is our window of opportunity: let's not miss this chance to fundamentally change our university into one in which all students can thrive.

Thank you,

Dr. Michele Schlehofer
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Department of Psychology