

A CHECKLIST FOR CAMPUS LEADERS POST-ELECTION

University leaders have an opportunity post-election to become trusted sources of accurate information, to remind students, faculty, staff, alumni, and their surrounding communities about common values, and to bridge differences to build understanding. The public tends to trust their integrity and non-partisan approach. Speaking out may be crucial during the post-election period if the public receives conflicting information from public officials and social media sources and/or if fears/anger are aggravated by rhetoric or incidents regarding race and equity, public health (covid-19), and economic uncertainty. A checklist of considerations relating to speaking includes:

- **RESPOND EARLY:** Speak in hours rather than days after a potentially divisive matter arises, before false narratives begin to take hold.
- **FRAME:** Frame the situation by summarizing what has happened or is occurring, noting underlying concerns, recognizing the impact of the situation, announcing any decisions, and describing the often-competing values involved in improving the situation.
- **EXPAND UNDERSTANDING ACROSS DIVISIONS:** Use your statements to help people understand each other. Listen to the broader community and acknowledge, where pertinent, that decisions/situations impact people differently. Explain why that is occurring and point out the value of allowing people to be heard and afforded opportunities to flourish.
- **MENTION SHARED GOALS:** Reference aspirations (such as the just-mentioned desire that all segments of the OSU community are welcomed and afforded opportunity) shared by the vast majority of people within each part of the community.
- **TEACH AND CREATE OPTIONS:** Capture the opportunity presented by divisive incidents and conflicts for students to learn to advocate, negotiate, facilitate, and understand each other, laws regarding freedom of expression, and conflict resolution techniques. Offer students safe and effective options to meet their needs and goals.
- **ENCOURAGE OTHER LEADERS TO SPEAK OUT:** Use your contacts, and make more, to persuade OSU Board members, other university and student leaders, and community leaders – including faith leaders, social media influencers, sports figures, non-profits (YWCA, Urban League), business leaders and chambers, and associations (OSUAA, Regional Campus Leaders, etc.) – to emphasize similar points, as a strategy to expand the number of people who trust the message.
- **KEEP SPEAKING:** Communicate with the community frequently during tense times to reassure as new false rumors abound. Reaffirm your message with a short quote or photo that will receive even wider circulation, including a web reference for more information. Send messages to celebrate when progress has been made.
- **USE AN AUTHENTIC VOICE:** During volatile times, you may be able to “get through” to people by: speaking more informally, not simply repeating the “buzz” words used by particular groups but substituting your own language, and responding to events with the urgency felt by administrators, faculty, staff, and students and the broader community.
- **USE MULTIPLE MEDIA:** Strategize with others on how to reach multiple audiences within the community. Perhaps create a go-to site that provides accurate information quickly as events change.

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An illustration:

Ohio State Newark Dean Bill MacDonald has graciously permitted us to use his October 5, 2020 statement to the Newark community about racist acts against some of his students. Though the content regarding post-election statements will differ, Bill's statement illustrates some of the checklist concepts. His full statement is here:

https://newark.osu.edu/assets/newark/MPR_ssc%2020/CommunityLetter_MacDonald.pdf

Frame: "If one member of our campus community experiences any form of racism, then I have not done enough in my role as dean to promote racial justice and equity. In one week this September, I received reports of three separate incidents of overt, racial discrimination or harassment against students enrolled on this campus. All three occurred in our community. . . If I do not act, then I am complicit in perpetrating racism. Fortunately, I am surrounded by amazing people who have brilliant ideas and who help me act. Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusions Committee recently recommended a set of anti-racism initiatives, and various campus groups are now vetting them. I pledge to integrate the refined initiatives into the campus's strategic plan and to fund them." (other announced decisions and initiatives are omitted here)

Use an authentic voice: "Considering that evidence, I would have to been an ostrich to think that I am doing enough to prevent and eliminate racism. Clearly I have more to do. . . Listening is an important action for any leader. And it is extremely important for a white male leader like me – who has never been a victim of racism – to listen to the victims of racism because it is impossible for me to know it as they know it. . . So, I listen with the intent to act."

Expand understanding across divisions: "As the campus and its benefactors have opened the door ever wider to all Ohioans, the racial and ethnic diversity of our students has increased spectacularly. Approximately 34% are racial or ethnic minorities, up from 4% when I came to campus in 1992. Our students add tremendously to the diversity of our community, and though many of them commute from outside Licking County, they contribute to the community through internships, jobs, volunteer service, philanthropy, and through their purchases of goods and services."

Encourage others leaders to speak out: "I ask all area organizations, including government agencies and businesses, to join us. . . Our students are part of our community, and they need us to do more than acknowledge that racism exists here. They need us to listen better than we have. They need us to act more than we have. They need us to take racism apart. I am dedicating myself to that goal. Will you join me?"

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