

Dear Students, Alumni, and Community Members:

Over the past several weeks, we, the Psychology Department faculty, have heard through email from hundreds of students, alumni, community members, and staff with concerns about Charles Negy's personal Twitter posts. We responded individually to each of these inquiries with a message that affirmed that the UCF Psychology Department is unequivocally committed to diversity and inclusion, and vehemently denounces all racist comments and attitudes. We stand with President Cartwright and the UCF Community in condemning hatred and racism in all forms, particularly in this moment as we mourn the murder of George Floyd.

Though our initial focus was to reach out to the many individuals who had contacted us directly and to respond to inquiries for information from multiple offices within the university, we also wanted to reach out specifically to all of you, our students, alumni, and community members. We recognize that silence can be painful, and we hope you will forgive any tardiness to this message. Also, while we recognize the need to honor due process as the university launches an inquiry into possible classroom bias, we also wish to clearly state that the opinions in Dr. Negy's posts directed toward groups largely underrepresented in our nation are insensitive, hurtful, offensive, and wrong, and made many question the core values of the Department of Psychology.

To be clear: We stand united with our fellow UCF Knights, be they students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members in stating that racism, ethnic and religious bias, gender bias, sexual orientation bias, and all other forms of explicit and implicit discrimination and prejudice are wrong and will not be tolerated. Although everyone has a right to their personal beliefs, no university employee may ever mistreat or discriminate against students in their classes or any other university setting. Because the university received complaints alleging unfair treatment in Dr. Negy's classroom, UCF launched an inquiry to gather more information. That process is ongoing.

While it may be frustrating for those calling for immediate action, UCF, as a public institution, must distinguish between his private speech and classroom behavior. In evaluating possible discrimination in the classroom, the university is required to follow specific processes that take time. We ask you for your patience.

In the meantime, if any member of our UCF community has been subjected to any form of discrimination, prejudice, intimidation, or bias, we ask that they contact the Office of Institutional Equity at oiie@ucf.edu or 407-823-1336. If individuals prefer to remain anonymous with their reporting, we encourage them to use the UCF IntegrityLine at www.ucfintegrityline.com or 855-877-6049.

Also, and most importantly, we, who are part of the Department of Psychology at UCF, need to take this opportunity to learn and to progress beyond messaging and towards sustainable action. In pursuit of this goal, we are inviting all members of our community, including students, staff, alumni, community partners, and faculty, to work towards several near-term objectives, of which two are listed below. These are:

1. Creating a mechanism for listening to narratives of students, staff, alumni, community members, and faculty of all backgrounds regarding experiences of discrimination, prejudice, and bias.
2. Develop plans for the Department to actively strengthen internal measures supporting diversity, inclusiveness, and non-discrimination.

We are extremely interested in hearing your additional suggestions with respect to what the Department can do to develop actionable steps to promote and further inclusiveness and diversity. In addition to your thoughts and suggestions, we are also looking for additional volunteers to join faculty and staff in this effort. We hope that you will consider joining us, as having wide participation in these efforts is vital to the success of our Department. Please reach out to us via email with your thoughts, suggestions, concerns, and questions at PsychologyFeedback@ucf.edu. We want and need to hear from you.

We believe that a broad, collective effort, that includes members of our Department and our larger University-community, is the best way to move the Psychology Department forward to create actionable and sustainable initiatives. Nothing is as powerful as a collective response towards a common goal and common resolutions to do better. We also believe that nothing is more powerful than a list of specific actions that will be taken to increase diversity, fairness, and inclusiveness.

All of us need to be part of this response: students, staff, alumni, community members, and faculty. We believe many of you are ready to join us in this work, which will require a lot of listening, mutual respect, compassion, and most critically, (self-) reflection. Consequently, we invite you to actively participate in making our shared learning spaces the best that they can be. We need to listen to each other's concerns and suggestions in this effort to become better.

We are listening to you, but only collectively can we make certain our shared voice is heard and translated into action for a better, fairer future. Please reach out to us with your thoughts and suggestions.

Sincerely,

The Psychology Department Faculty

Originally Posted 6/10/2020; Revised 6/17/2020