



August 23, 2017

Dear Members of the SUNY Canton Community:

It seems strange, given that this is 2017, to write a letter to the campus community asking us to stand up against hatred and bigotry and their manifestations of white supremacy and Nazism and for things that should be self-evident to every American—equality, truth, and justice. Yet, after the horrific and tragic events taking place in Charlottesville last week, we have no choice.

It also seems strange, given that this is 2017, to have to point out that persons marching with torches past synagogues and parks onto a college campus, chanting “Jews will not replace us,” are not “*very fine people*.” Heavily armed people marching with swastikas or Confederate flags are not supporters of the Constitution or defenders of historical accuracy. They are bigots who are trying to tear down the ideals that this country stands for. It should not be controversial for any American to rise up to oppose the hatred that these persons espoused. There is no moral equivalence between those who advocate white supremacy or Nazism and those who oppose them.

To be clear, people in this country have the right to espouse their views in the public square. Reasonable people can disagree on how best to deal with Confederate monuments. We all, however, have the obligation to stand up and say how repugnant we find racism and anti-Semitism to be. We all have the obligation to stand with President Washington’s sentiments when he wrote: “*To bigotry no sanction; to persecution no assistance.*” We all have the obligation to stand with President Reagan when he said: “*Let us resolve that we the people will build an American opportunity society in which all of us—white and black, rich and poor, young and old—will go forward together arm in arm. Again, let us remember that though our heritage is one of blood lines from every corner of the Earth, we are all Americans pledged to carry on this last, best hope of man on Earth.*” We all need to remember what Virginia’s governor, Terry McAuliffe, said: “*Neo-Nazis, Klansmen and white supremacists came to Charlottesville heavily armed, spewing hatred and looking for a fight. One of them murdered a young woman in an act of domestic terrorism, and two of our finest officers were killed in a tragic accident while serving to protect this community. This was not ‘both sides.’*”

The SUNY system stands against bigotry. A letter I received from Nancy Zimpher (SUNY Chancellor), H. Carl McCall (Chairman of the SUNY Board of Trustees), and Carlos Medina (SUNY Vice Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer), said:

*In the aftermath of the tragic events that unfolded in Charlottesville, Virginia just days ago and with the Fall semester quickly upon us, we want to affirm once again that The State University of New York and all of our campuses will continue to be*

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*the inclusive communities that our students, faculty, staff, neighbors, and visitors have come to expect and deserve.*

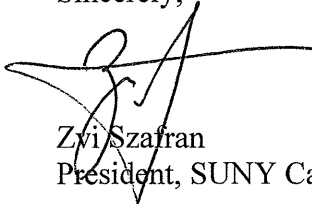
*SUNY stands united against racism, violence, and intimidation. We support our underrepresented populations to the fullest extent. We do all we can to protect the free exchange of ideas and learning that are, and must always be, synonymous with university life.*

*As the largest system of public higher education serving New York State, we have the capacity – and what’s more, we have a responsibility – to serve as a model community, one that ensures acceptance in all forms. Guided by our founding principles and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy, we must continue our work to ensure these commitments are upheld and that all feel safe and welcome within SUNY, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity.*

*SUNY’s commitment to sustaining a safe and welcoming climate for all of our constituencies has never been stronger.*

Our credo at SUNY Canton is a simple, yet powerful one: **Everyone is welcome here.** We stand with the families of those killed in Charlottesville—Heather Heyer, Lt. H. Jay Cullen, and Trooper Berke M.M. Bates. We stand with our American ideals of equality, justice, and freedom. We stand with all of our students, faculty, and staff, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity, as we stand with all people of good will. As the Fall semester begins, we will be sponsoring several programs and events to bring us together in solidarity. We stand with you, and invite you to stand with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zvi Szafran', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Zvi Szafran  
President, SUNY Canton