

Renewing our commitment to diversity, safety on campus

Bernie Patterson, for USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin

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Each August, we welcome new and returning students to the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus. More than ever this fall, we want our students, faculty and staff to know they are welcome here.

Recent events across the country and even on our own campus move me to emphasize the importance of a diverse community at UW-Stevens Point. Ethnic, racial and religious diversity, as well as varying political viewpoints, enhance the learning in and out of the classroom. This goes beyond enriching campus life to recognizing diverse perspectives are needed to thrive in our global society.

We talk of an inclusive environment on campus. This means everyone is welcome, respected and has a contribution to our university community. Everyone has the right to feel safe and valued. Everyone has the opportunity to live, study and work in an environment that helps them succeed.

We were deeply saddened by the display of hate, bigotry and violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, earlier this month. Acts of bias or hate anywhere are an offense against us all. Behavior intended to harass, intimidate and interfere with the education process will not be tolerated at UW-Stevens Point. We will not allow our students to be put in harm's way.

A few incidents on or near campus in the past year remind us that no community is immune from bias. We have taken several steps to prevent incidents and respond if and when they do occur. Among them:

- We have hired two staff members to advance diversity and inclusivity efforts on campus. Lindsey Bernhagen, who grew up in the Stevens Point area, has returned to lead the Center for Inclusive Teaching and Learning. Our new director of Diversity and College Access is Lizette Rivera.
- Several listening sessions have been held with leaders of diverse student organizations and university administrators.
- Inclusivity training is required for first-year students.
- A “diversity corridor” was created in the Dreyfus University Center that includes a Multicultural Resource Center, Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, International Students and Scholars Office and drop-in tutoring services.
- All reports of bias- and hate-related incidents are investigated to the fullest extent possible. Both University Police and Security Services and the Stevens Point Police Department have been involved with incidents last year. Citations were issued, where possible.
- The Dean of Students Office investigates violations of University policy and can impose a variety of sanctions ranging from educational coursework, removal from campus housing to suspension.
- A new Center for Prevention (in the Dean of Students Office) has implemented a comprehensive sexual assault/interpersonal violence prevention and awareness program.



- Coffee and Culture and other programming is offered to students, featuring topics on inclusivity and demographic changes in the United States.
- UW-Stevens Point is dedicated to engagement, responsibility, respect, inclusivity and civil discourse. We are committed to ensuring a safe, welcoming community for our students, faculty, staff and guests.

As we begin the new academic year at UW-Stevens Point, my sincere welcome goes to each individual on campus. To parents moving their students to residence halls in the next few days, please be assured we will take good care of your children. Our faculty and staff are here to support them in their studies, ensure safety on campus and help guide them on the path to successful, fulfilling futures.

This fall, let's replace hate with love, bias with inclusion and violence with peace.

Bernie Patterson is the chancellor at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

<http://www.stevenspointjournal.com/story/news/local/2017/08/31/chancellor-safe-point-partnership-seeks-enhance-student-safety-reduce-risks/619482001/>