

From: Chancellor Bernie Patterson

Sent: Friday, November 11, 2016 11:44 AM

To: Faculty/Staff List <dl-facstafflist@uwsp.edu>; Students Current List <dl-stucurr@uwsp.edu>

Subject: Respecting diversity of opinion

Dear students, faculty and staff members,

During the past few days, a number of students, faculty and staff members, who themselves hold very diverse points of view, have reached out to me concerned about our social environment. What better time than now to reaffirm our values at UW-Stevens Point.

We welcome and value diversity, including diversity of opinions. Pointers disagree agreeably and respect other points of view.

At the core of any university is the ability to express ideas, even unpopular ones. This is the foundation of academic freedom. It ensures the free flow of ideas and opinions, even those offensive to some. We value diversity of opinion and freedom of speech. Civil discourse does not mean we all have to agree. Quite the opposite. Civil discourse is the means by which we express diversity of ideas, diversity of thoughts, diversity of perspectives. It is the minimum standard we expect of all.

When hateful comments or acts of bias undermine the educational process, when comments personally degrade and intentionally humiliate or intimidate others, when actions make others feel unsafe, we will not tolerate them. These actions are an offense against us all.

All members of our campus community deserve to feel safe and to live and work in an environment that helps them succeed. If you feel threatened, report it immediately. If you witness or experience an incident of bias, report it to the Dean of Students, Protective Services or Stevens Point police. If you wish to remain anonymous, use the online reporting tool at www.uwsp.edu/dos.

If you need to talk, many on this campus are ready to listen. Find a trusted friend or group who shares your interest or concern. Reach out to others who may have similar experiences and provide support and understanding. Call or stop by the Dean of Students office, any of the Diversity and College Access offices, the Counseling Center, or the CA in your residence hall. We all have a collective responsibility to denounce hate speech, to model compassion and empathy.

I invite you to join the diversity conversation on Monday evening, Nov. 14, from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Dreyfus University Theater. Feel free to join for the time your schedule allows.

We value the contributions each of our students, faculty and staff members makes at UW-Stevens Point. Our campus – and our community – is richer for its diversity. We welcome different backgrounds, ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and political preferences. Let's embrace our differences. They make us stronger, as a university, community, state and nation. Let mutual respect for differences radiate from this institution.

Sincerely,

Bernie L. Patterson
Chancellor