

Dear Lawrentians,

Earlier this week President Burstein sent a message acknowledging the work ahead of us to become a more diverse, inclusive and welcoming community. For a variety of reasons — including reactions to a Tuesday evening meeting where a group of students shared their experiences, anger, and frustration as well as presenting demands and concerns for the institution — tensions have been running very high throughout the week. In the last 48 hours, members of our community are expressing fear for their safety, frustration that issues are not being addressed (or addressed fast enough), being overwhelmed and emotionally spent by the toll these complex and very personal issues take when they are faced head-on, and the feeling of being targeted and victims of harassment and threats.

All of this comes on top of the regular stressors that accompany the end of classes, final exams and the long break ahead.

I have always been proud of Lawrence students for valuing the kind of community we are. Not to say things have ever been perfect, but there is a type of bond that has been demonstrated by Lawrentians, particularly in difficult times. We need to find a way to be respectful of each other without abandoning or silencing expressions of deeply-held convictions, and we need to challenge ourselves to resist the temptation of striking out toward others as a replacement for dialogue and the hard work that is necessary to truly build community and understanding.

It is clear that, as an academic and campus community, we have much work to do. I can assure you that President Burstein and I, along with our Cabinet colleagues, will be focusing serious attention on these issues and action plans during the December break and beyond. As with all things that are of importance to the entire campus, we will want input, suggestions, and assistance from students, faculty and staff. It is especially important that we continue to hear student voices so we can more fully understand the variety of student experiences. Watch for opportunities to hear about progress being made and plan to be engaged in ongoing efforts to become a more inclusive Lawrence once Term II begins.

Please take care of yourself and do all you can to care for others who are hurting and struggling with both personal situations and important issues. Best wishes during finals and have a safe and much-deserved winter break.

Nancy Truesdell
VP for Student Affairs