

NOVEMBER 18, 2019

OLLAS FACULTY STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF UNO LATINO STUDENTS



As we all have read, an anonymous note meant to intimidate and alienate was left on the car of a Latino student on Tuesday. Latinos are one of the largest and growing groups at UNO, with approximately 2,000 Latino students on campus, comprising 14% of the student body. We are currently an emerging Hispanic serving institution, which means that this number will only increase in the coming years. Our UNO Latino student body is as diverse as our community, comprised mostly by Latino youth born and raised in Nebraska, but also including immigrants and refugees from all over Latin America. To ensure a welcoming place, the UNO community should proactively support all unrepresented students and, in this particular time, those young Latinos whose belonging and prospects are being questioned by their status as Dreamers or DACA recipients.

The Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS) strives to ensure that UNO students and the broader campus and Omaha community have the education and the skills needed to understand the connection of Latinos and the community, region, and country in which they live. As part of a metropolitan university directly connected with its community, our role is to educate all members of our community, an education that includes spotlighting the central role that Latinos have played for more than 100 years in Omaha and will continue playing in the future of the state. We are open and willing to lead that education and discussion as we have done since OLLAS was founded in 2003. Echoing the words of UNO's Chancellor, colleagues, and students, we restate that UNO, and OLLAS specifically, is a safe and welcoming place to all who seek to learn. At the same time, we strongly condemn any kind of hate against our community, especially toward underrepresented students. Acts of hate should have appropriate consequences, but we also strongly believe that that education is the best answer to combat hate.

This past Saturday, November 16th, was United Nations' International Day of Tolerance. Tolerance, according to the International Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, "is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others." We hope that the hate and ignorance expressed in the anonymous note will provide for an opportunity for UNO to demonstrate its sense of community and tolerance for all of the individuals that make up our community.

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Nebraska at Omaha or University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

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