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April 15, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for writing to share your condemnation of the repugnant chalkings on the Diag. These messages are hurtful to members of the University of Michigan community, inconsistent with the values to which we aspire, and antithetical to the intellectual life of our campus.

We agree that all Arab, Muslim, and MENA (Middle Eastern and North African) students, faculty, staff and visitors should feel welcome and have an equal opportunity to thrive at U-M. Their presence makes our campus better in every way.

University leadership has had frequent, ongoing discussions with Arab, Muslim, and MENA students about the campus climate for several months. This includes a Jan. 11 meeting at the President's house with students from these groups and collaboration and the Jan. 25 "Sharing Stories, Building Allyhood: Student Voices Against Islamophobia" event on campus.

Leaders from Student Life and the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts have worked closely with the Islamophobia Working Group, including incorporating the group's feedback into the college's diversity, equity and inclusion plan. Vice President Royster Harper and Dean of Students Laura Blake Jones met with student leaders Wednesday. Senior university leaders, including the President, participated alongside students representing racial, ethnic, religious, and LGBTQ groups in a listening session Wednesday organized by the U.S. Attorney's Office.

We have also worked to communicate our values of respect, civility and equality. The President's speech at winter 2015 commencement addressed the challenging balance between constitutional rights and a sense of safety, specifically referencing Islamophobia. Remarks at the U-M Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium in January discussed the hostility and hateful messages the students had experienced in the context of our work to do better as a university.

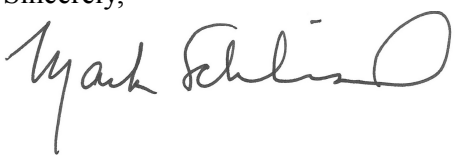
After learning of the offensive chalk messages, the university reaffirmed our values in our initial statement. This was followed by a March 31 post of the President's website titled "We Stand Together Against Hate," which was linked to from his twitter account. On April 7, the President published an essay on the Huffington Post discussing the degrading of our discourse through disrespect, hate, bigotry and targeted attacks.

Last Friday, student body President Cooper Charlton and President Schlissel sent an email to all students on our Ann Arbor campus calling the messages "repugnant and hurtful to members of our community." Correspondence with the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee's Michigan Regional Office resulted in a message of support earlier this week.

We have been very impressed by the members of our community who have taken a stance against the anti-Islam messages. In addition to you and those you mentioned, we have seen students reaching out to one another and offering support.

We all agree that racism and discrimination have no place at the University of Michigan.

Sincerely,



Mark S. Schlissel
President



Martha E. Pollack
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs



Andrew D. Martin
Dean, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts