



MEMORANDUM

TO: UAH Community

FROM: Robert A. Altenkirch, President
Delois Smith, Vice President for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs

DATE: November 14, 2016

SUBJECT: Civility in the Academy

Recently, very shortly after the presidential election, **The Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs** began receiving calls, emails and text messages concerning how best to respond to comments, strongly held and expressed beliefs, opinions and some pointed incidents surrounding the results of the presidential election. While the university should well be *the* place where we can and should actively engage in robust discussions and the exchange of ideas, it is equally important to keep at the forefront the essential foundation of civility and respectful decorum in these exchanges. Our core values include integrity and respect, inclusiveness and diversity, which are guiding principles. The university is, and continues to be, an institution of *higher* learning through teaching and research in the arts, sciences, and literature. Citizens within the academy (faculty, staff, students and administrators) have a quintessentially shared responsibility of common purpose, and a sense of community around the tenets of civility espoused within that community. The university, more than any other place, is where we learn and hone this practice of civility. Kent M. Weeks in his book,

In Search of Civility: Confronting Incivility On The College Campus stated,

“Indeed, we’ve reached a point where incivility isn’t just unreasonable---it’s considered marketable and entertaining. The growing culture of incivility represents more than a lack of good manners; it is a lack of consideration for other people. If left unchecked, this lack of respect can perpetuate more incivility and can lead to even more dangerous uncivil conduct.”

The right of free expression of ideas and actions afforded us in the first amendment to the Constitution carries an obligation as well. We should be mindful to extend to others the same courtesy, consideration and respect we would wish extended to us in the exercise of those same rights. In the days and weeks ahead, as we experience the transition of the U. S. presidency, we should be especially mindful of the following: **Civility** in the community, **Respect** for all people, **Patience** with others in all things, **Understanding** of those who differ and are different, **Openness** and willingness to listen to all sides of an issue or concern.

The Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs will hold an open campus forum on Thursday, November 17, from 6:30-8:30 p.m., Chan Auditorium. Please join us and be an active, civil, bridge builder.