



CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

Katherine Bergeron
President

March 29, 2015

Dear Members of the Connecticut College Community,

It has been a difficult time for all of us. There were many powerful things said in last week's open meetings and in the many emails and conversations since then. Your words have been very much with me for the past three days.

I am writing to let you know where these conversations have led me and where I think we, as a community, must go from here.

By now, there have been many opinions expressed about the original Facebook post, as well as about subsequent comments on Yik Yak and elsewhere. But one thing has become extremely clear: the level of harm that incendiary language can have on a community. The post caused an outpouring of anger and pain among many different groups of students, faculty, and staff. The groundswell of reaction makes it clear that the issue goes far beyond the effects of a single post. It is about who we are as a community.

Earlier today, as I was writing this letter, I learned of another incident of racist graffiti in the restrooms of Crozier-Williams. We must take action immediately to expose and eradicate this ignorance and hatred. I have decided to cancel tomorrow's classes to ensure these events receive the proper attention.

Connecticut College is a community that values the dignity of all people. As your president, I will not tolerate forms of racist or hateful speech designed to demean, denigrate, or dehumanize.

Even though speech may be protected does not mean that we have to approve of the odious things that people choose to say with their freedom. I do not approve. It does mean, though, that we can and should use our freedom to speak out against injustice.

So many of you have come together in the last weeks and days — and even this afternoon and evening — to do that. It has given me a new sense of hope. I am writing to say that I stand with you. Now I ask you to work with me in making Connecticut College a place that we are proud to call our home.

Tomorrow morning, we will come together to continue the work. I will present near-term goals for strengthening our community. You will receive more information about this all-campus meeting later tonight. On Tuesday, March 31, I will be available for open hours, and for discussions about how we move forward in the next days.

Yours,

Katherine Bergeron