



MERCYHURST

UNIVERSITY

501 East 38th Street
Erie, PA 16546

814-824-2000
800-825-1926

mercyhurst.edu

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Dear Students, Colleagues, and Friends,

As we begin the liturgical season of Lent, I write to call our Mercyhurst community to join me in reflecting on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. I ask that we all consider, with humility, honesty, and hope, where we are as a community and as individuals – our aspirations and our shortcomings.

Amidst our diverse spiritual backgrounds, all of us share in the aspirations articulated in our core values, shown below my signature. As a community, we assert that these interconnected values focus on human dignity, social relations, acting in solidarity with diverse peoples, and transcending mere tolerance. In accordance with the values, we want our community:

- To be diverse in meaningful ways, including in terms of age, ability, neurotypicality, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity, race, religion, educational status, socioeconomic status, marital status, and veteran status.
- To be equitable, a place where policies, practices, and norms do not have disparate impacts associated with different identities.
- To be proactively inclusive, a place where no one feels compelled to self-edit in order to fit in, but rather invited to enrich the whole by being their own true selves.
- To embrace a justice that looks deeply at attitudes and structures and musters the courage to make real changes and to reconcile when needed.

In a spirit of repentance, humility, honesty, and hope, I invite us to consider where we are in terms of these values, as a campus community and as individuals.

I invite us to *repentance*. We are not yet meeting these aspirations. Some of you have pointed to specific instances in which we have fallen short; others have identified the underlying obstacles to our success. I am grateful to those who speak out. I am grateful as well to those who ask how they might help move us forward. Yet in our predominantly white institution, many of us think about these concerns only when egregious incidents capture our attention or when complaints are registered. Some may argue that the broader culture in our country and in the world is fraught with discord and ignorance, and that we should not expect our campus to be any different. But something indispensable sets this campus apart—we are clear about the values that must guide and sustain us. Others may minimize the challenges we face, noting that we are all generally welcoming and nice people who do not mean harm. But being nice will not move this campus forward and does not keep those who feel marginalized from experiencing harm. Mercy demands far more than niceness.

I invite us to *humility*. I ask each of you to commit to humble consideration of your own role in our community's DEIJ challenges and in the path to becoming better. This begins through praying, listening, and reflecting on the ways in which (sometimes unknowingly) we as individuals and as a community have contributed to disaffection and disparity in our community. This path of humility will often call us to speak less and to listen in new ways, especially to those whose experiences are different from our own.

I invite us to *honesty*. Considering my emphatic request to you, you ought to ask me what I am doing to make things better. I know that I must continue to grow as an effective advocate for equity. Through ongoing learning, broad reading, and frank conversations with colleagues, advisors, and friends, I am committed to critical self-reflection as an individual and as a campus. Only then can I hope to lead Mercyhurst to deeper commitment and effective, sustainable actions.

Lastly, I invite us to do this work in a spirit of *hope*. As Pope Francis said in his 2019 Lenten message, this is a season for re-discovering that we are made for the fire that always burns, not for the ashes that burn quickly and go out right away. With hope for the tremendous untapped potential for this campus, we must expand our individual and collective capacity and endurance to engage in honest and difficult conversations, increase diversity in our ranks, create a more inclusive and just culture, and better educate students to understand their professional opportunities and personal responsibilities to eliminate structural barriers to equity, inclusion, and justice.

With significant support from members of the Board of Trustees, my DEIJ Advisory Council, and many passionate individuals across Mercyhurst, I can report that we are making progress. In the coming months, we will

- Issue a substantive public Mercyhurst University DEIJ Statement
- Establish a proactive reporting system for incidents of bias
- Launch a DEIJ webpage and Hub site
- Identify new intentional multicultural space(s) on campus
- Update imagery around campus with sensitivity to diversity
- Expand to award more BEYOND scholarships in fall 2022
- Support and expand DEIJ programs (speakers, films, artwork, etc.), not just around MLK Day, Black History Month, and Juneteenth, but throughout the year
- Conduct a Campus Climate Survey which will include a strong DEIJ section

These are important initial steps. *This journey to fulfill our campus DEIJ mission will be measured in years. Our progress will be made over weeks and months. Our commitment must be daily. In the simple words of Catherine McAuley that are so close to my heart, may we be good today and better tomorrow. Today I ask that you join me in approaching this challenge with hope—that through repentance, humility, and honesty, and our collective goodwill, we will find increasing reasons to celebrate our progress in living the Mercy mission.*

Creator God, fill us with your mercy so that we, in turn, may be merciful to others. Strip away self-satisfaction, pride, and suspicion so that we may seek reconciliation, peace, and justice.

In mercy and humility,

Kathleen Getz

President, Mercyhurst University

Our core values:

- **Socially merciful**, - Mercy restores human dignity, expands our social relations, and empowers us to reach out in compassion to others.
- **Globally responsible**, - Globalization challenges us to learn how to steward the resources of the Earth wisely and to act in solidarity with its diverse peoples.
- **Compassionately hospitable**, - Mercy hospitality begins with self-acceptance, welcomes peoples of different faith, ethnic, and cultural traditions, and thus builds communities that transcend mere tolerance.
- **Intellectually creative**, - Generous, inquiring, and critical habits of mind, which support the aspirations for excellence manifested within the academic community, encourage us in our lifelong search for what is true, good, and beautiful.
- **Reflectively aware**, - Our Christian environment encourages self-reflection and contemplation of human behavior, promotes balance of mind, body, and spirit, and ultimately offers the opportunity to develop a moral compass for a life of integrity.

Ambassadors of service.