Chair’s statement on inclusion and diversity

In light of the recent racist incidents here on our campus, I am writing this letter to reiterate the high value that our department places on inclusion and diversity.

MLLL is a department that studies human nature by closely examining language, culture, literature, and linguistics. Our fields contribute to multiculturalism and strive to teach diversity in perspective. We closely examine different ways of thinking about and understanding the world we live in, and our studies frequently include or center on contributions made by marginalized populations, both within the US and around the globe.

The faculty, students, staff, and friends of MLLL form a community that celebrates diversity and values inclusion, not only in our classrooms but on our campus and in our extended communities. As a group, we differ in our backgrounds and hold vastly different values and perspectives, and we see this as a wonderful wealth of knowledge that makes our classes, our research, and our communities stronger, more vibrant, and more complete.

As a department, we strive to create a safe environment built on mutual respect and professionalism, an environment that allows for us to engage meaningfully in the examination of ideas and the creation of new knowledge. We strongly oppose all forms of discrimination, oppression, and marginalization, and we hold that there is no room for this type of behavior, within the field of education or anywhere else.

While we do not pretend that racism and other forms of oppression have disappeared, we strive to do our best to provide an educational environment where students of all backgrounds can feel safe, appreciated, and valued. If and when we fail, we must work to be open to feedback, to be willing to listen, and to be intent on making our environment more understanding and welcoming to all. And in order to achieve this, we need the help of every member of our community: students, staff, faculty, and friends of the department.

If any of us witness marginalizing or problematic behavior, it is important to address it through the options available to us as faculty, staff, and students at OU. This may include: speaking directly to the offending peer or colleague, speaking to your instructor, advisor, or supervisor, bringing it to the attention of administration, and/or filing a formal complaint (some OU resources are listed below).

We cannot stand by and expect victims to shoulder the responsibility of reporting events and educating others. Rather, by taking appropriate action, as bystanders, we can help
work towards a future where there are fewer victims, and, one hopes, let victims know that they are supported and not alone.

MLLL appreciates every member of our community. Especially when confronted with issues of race, oppression, and marginalization, I would like to encourage all of us to hold strong to our values of inclusion, to show empathy to and to support those who are in need, to be fair and understanding listeners, and to put effort into making our community a more understanding, more inclusive, and more welcoming space. This is what we do. We are scholars, students, and staff in a department that aims to create and disseminate knowledge about the importance of language, culture, and literature, and, working together, we can make OU a more diverse, inclusive space that enriches us all.

Sincerely,

Dylan Herrick, Chair, MLLL

A few campus resources

The Office of University Community
The Norman Campus Office of University Community works towards OU’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and has a number of resources and a link to the bias reporting hotline. You can also contact Dr. Jane Irungu, university.community@ou.edu, (405) 325-7314.
http://www.ou.edu/community

Student Support Centers
The Student Support Centers listed below are all located in the Oklahoma Memorial Union 900 Asp Avenue, Suite 370
(405) 325-3163
http://www.ou.edu/content/studentlife.html
• Gender-based Violence Prevention
• Women’s Outreach Center
• LGBTQ and Health Programs
• African American Student Life
• American Indian Student Life
• Latino Student Life
• Asian American Student Life
Behavioral Intervention Team
Reports to BIT allow the team to reach out to individuals and appropriate offices on campus to provide appropriate intervention and support.
http://www.ou.edu/normanbit

Title IX / Sexual Misconduct Offices
Norman Campus Information
Four Partners Place, 301 David L. Boren Blvd., Suite 1000
(405) 325-2215
smo@ou.edu

OU Counseling Psychology Clinic
3200 Marshall Ave.
(405) 325-2914
http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/counseling-psychology-clinic.html

Goddard Counseling Center
The mission of the University Counseling Center is to promote student success, both in and out of the classroom, by providing the highest quality psychological services.
(405) 325-2911
http://www.ou.edu/ucc

International Student Services (ISS)
Providing international students with support and expert advice on issues such as immigration, visa, healthcare, scholarships, and travel grants.
Farzaneh Hall, 729 Elm Avenue, RM 144
(405) 325 - 3337
iss@ou.edu
http://www.ou.edu/content/cis/iss.html

Project Threshold
Academic support for first-generation, economically disadvantaged, or disabled students.
Lissa and Cy Wagner Hall, 1005 Asp Ave, Suite 215
(405) 325-6261
threshold@ou.edu

Please also feel free to contact any trusted faculty or your advisor if you wish to discuss anything at all related to this incident or other thoughts or concerns.