

Message from the President

I want to update the campus community about the situation involving the self-identified white supremacist student who was suspended for posting a threatening message on social media. I understand the situation is upsetting and frightening to many students, faculty staff and parents. In fact, all of the vice presidents and I have been responding to students, parents, staff and faculty, and the pain as well as the fear is palpable and actually emotionally draining to witness. I wish I had a magic wand that could address all of that and could solve the historic problems of racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, etc. I really wish that we could take away the pain and fear.

Please know we're working hard to ensure safety, while still following the required processes for student discipline.

The student's Panel Appeal Conduct Hearing is scheduled for 9a.m. Monday, Nov. 20. The news media is reporting that there will be a protest during his hearing. Based on the experience of protesters at the University of Florida, the expectation is that the number will be few.

Because of the protest, we're moving the hearing to Alumni Hall, Building 60. Alumni Hall is located on Kernan Boulevard and is away from the academic core of campus. As I have said previously, the policy requires a suspended student to be escorted by University police from the campus police building to the hearing and then back to the police station.

Law enforcement practice is to request that there isn't a counter-protest. There's always a possibility of friction between the opposing parties. But, I know that some are indeed planning to counter-protest, and I urge all parties to protest peaceably; we don't want to see anyone hurt or anyone arrested. No protestors will be allowed into Alumni Hall. Parking for protestors will be across the street in the Hicks Hall parking lot, Lot 53.

In addition, the University Police Department is working with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and will have additional officers at Alumni Hall and throughout the campus. We will have extra police in uniform and also undercover as we've had all week.

After consultation, the University won't be cancelling classes as we feel that the campus will be safe. We also don't want to let hate win.

For those of you who aren't familiar with student conduct hearings, these usually take about an hour. By law, these are closed hearings and no public or media is in the room. This particular hearing is set because the student is appealing his immediate suspension and is to determine if the student should remain suspended based on the pertinent law. The decision is made by the

panel deliberating after the hearing is concluded and the student exits. The panel then reports their decision to the vice president of Student Affairs. The student will likely be notified of the decision Monday afternoon or Tuesday. Again, this is to determine only if the student should remain suspended. Federal law (FERPA) dictates that the results of a conduct hearing aren't public; however, a student is certainly allowed to make the decision known publicly.

Immediate suspensions involve a two-step process. Regardless of whether the suspension is upheld, the next step is a formal charge of misconduct to the student. Then there's another panel hearing to determine the merits of the charge and possible discipline. The student has told the media that he plans a lawsuit.

I recognize the past few weeks have been enormously stressful for many. Frankly, I can see it in the eyes of those who have been responding to concerns and that includes what I see and hear. Please keep in mind that students are able to speak with counselors by contacting the Counseling Center at (904) 620-2602. Employees also have a resource in the [Employee Assistance Program](#). As always, if you see something that concerns you, contact the UPD at (904) 620-2800. No matter who you are or what you're feeling, there is someone here to help.