November 13, 2015

Dear members of the KU community,

Significant concerns expressed by students, faculty and staff at the recent town hall meeting indicate how we are failing to be a just, respectful and inclusive place for all people on our campus. Acts of racism, harassment and violence threaten student success and personal safety. The descriptions of marginalization shared with sincerity and emotion should make us each look within ourselves to discover how we have allowed this to happen at KU.

A call for action has been made to right the wrongs we have ignored for too long. We have heard the needs of students of color and other diverse backgrounds. We must act now to make our campus a place where students can feel safe to succeed, and all can live and work in an atmosphere of support and inclusion.

Our students need our help. They are not asking to be coddled or given any special privileges. They are just asking to feel as though they matter – on Jayhawk Boulevard, in their dorms, in the cafeterias, in the classrooms of our campus, and of course, the community at large.

The University Senate at KU is the representative body responsible for acting on behalf of the faculty, staff and students in matters that affect the governance of the University. Its focus is on the effective operation of the University, and its mission is to provide a voice to those who work and study at this institution. It is also the body that can affect changes in the rules and regulations that guide important elements of the university environment.

At the meeting of the Senate Executive Committee on Tuesday, Nov. 17, we will hear from some who can help the Senate become the catalyst for action that KU requires at this critical moment. We have many good people at this university who have expressed the willingness to work together with the students to achieve the positive change we need. We can make this happen.

The changes will not be easy, but things of importance rarely are. As we move forward, we must work together, listen to each other and not be willing to accept an attitude of complacency that allows us to perpetuate inequality.

As the presidents of the University, Faculty, Staff and Student Senates, we pledge to do all we can to make KU a place where all people can achieve their goals without fear or prejudice. We will reach out to the leadership of the Black Student Union and other student groups to be sure they know we are here for them. We will ask for their assistance as we make KU the place it must become.

We will report to you often in the coming weeks to keep you informed about this important effort. Please feel free to share your thoughts with us at govern@ku.edu.

Yours most sincerely,

Michael Williams
University Senate President

Tom Beisecker
Faculty Senate President

Chris Wallace
Staff Senate President

Jessie Pringle
Student Senate President