May 5, 2022

Dear Campus Community:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Black Advisory Council. Cowardly racists have once again taken aim at the Black students on our campus. Their actions are ignorant, repulsive and offensive to the campus. It is remarkable that there are individuals who continually feel so threatened by the presence and success of Black students on our campus that they would resort to such offensive, and cowardly rhetoric, doubling down and pretending to have a growing coalition. It is so sad that the very presence of Black students on this campus, many of whom have overcome tremendous odds and passed through great tribulations to achieve academic excellence, is seen as an offense to these racist individuals. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. rightly said many decades ago, "Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.” We are proud of the resilience shown by our Black students in response to this hate. We acknowledge and share your pain, frustrations, outrage and disgust, especially since it has proven so challenging to identify the individual(s) responsible for these targeted attacks. Your decision to work hard to achieve at the highest level, your tenacity and perseverance in the face of hardships and hate, is a rebuke against the injustices you have endured. We celebrate your remarkable achievements over the past semester and encourage you to not allow this thoughtless vitriol to distract you from finishing strong.

We share the heartbreak and outrage felt by all of those who strive to eradicate racism and discrimination from this campus. As a community, we want to take this opportunity as a rallying call to work toward establishing spaces where safety, solidarity, caring and healing are possible. To provide a space to react authentically and connect honestly. These acts of hatred have an impact on us all, but the time has come to be unwavering in our support for our Black students, staff and faculty. We hope to make these spaces a permanent and regular part of our support for the Black UMass community.

In our ongoing effort to provide a safe space for Black students, faculty and staff to share their feelings about the recent anti-Black racist email communications, the Black Advisory Council will host a forum this afternoon from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Du Bois Center, 22nd Floor of the Du Bois Library. While we appreciate the support of our non-Black colleagues and students, please note that this event is a space for
centering Black students, faculty and staff healing. Food and drinks will be provided.

Our UMass family is too important to allow bigotry to tear us apart. Our values and principles of tolerance and respect for others guide our interactions and attitudes. We therefore call on each person on our campus to strive for the "Beloved Community" that Dr. King envisioned, fought for and died for, by the bullet of a coward assassin who sought to silence him over 54 years ago. Dr. King envisioned a society where the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the affluent and the welfare recipient, white and Black — men and women, Republicans and Democrats, immigrant and citizen, who had been separated by social and legal codes, would be brought together in a common cause — to create the Beloved Community.

Let us leverage Dr. King’s vision to create a community of love, justice and solidarity here at UMass. We can do this through respect, integrity, kindness, compassion, empathy, dignity, humility, reconciliation, cooperation, understanding, unity, transparency, truth, forgiveness and yes, love! We can live this by embracing equity as we face, head-on, the seemingly intractable challenge of structural and systemic racism.

Sincerely,

Whitney Battle-Baptiste
Wilmore Webley
Co-Chairs on Behalf of the Black Advisory Council

University of Massachusetts Amherst