Dear Campus Community,

Our hearts go out to the loved ones and the victims of this weekend’s horrific shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue, the Tree of Life Congregation. Although this violent, anti-Semitic act appears to have been carried out by one individual, it is abundantly clear that there is an alarmingly large segment of our society that has been emboldened in recent years to openly espouse a hateful, intolerant worldview. Sadly, the violence resulting from this extremism has occurred with alarming regularity. Just days before this horrific act, described by the Anti-Defamation League as the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the history of the United States, a gunman opened fire in a Kentucky grocery store killing two African Americans in the latest of an increasingly long list of violent hate crimes.

We find ourselves at a deeply troubling point in our history where anti-Semitism, racism and all forms of bigotry have infected our mainstream social discourse. This normalization, in some quarters, of a level of intolerance that was once considered extreme and unwelcome in a civil society, has consequences – consequences that too often result in violence like the rage that burst into the Tree of Life Synagogue this weekend. The near constant exposure to these acts of hate also has consequences for all of us, both individually and collectively. For those members of our community seeking support, resources are available at the campus locations listed at the bottom of this message. Also, a vigil to reflect, grieve and support each other, organized by UMass Hillel, will take place at 6 p.m. on Monday in the Cape Cod Lounge. All are welcome.

As members of a university community we must all do our part to model the society we aspire to be. Despite the challenges we have faced this semester to foster a climate of tolerance and inclusion on our campus, I ask that we all continue to strive to do better. I also want to reaffirm UMass Amherst’s commitment to ensuring a safe and welcoming living-learning environment for every member of our campus community. And I call on every member of our community to reject hatred in all its forms and to stand united in defense of tolerance, diversity and inclusion.

Sincerely,

Kumble R. Subbaswamy

Chancellor

For updates on ways for the community to gather, share and support one another in the days ahead, please visit the diversity website: www.umass.edu/diversity
Additional resources are available at:

Center for Counseling and Psychological Health: www.umass.edu/counseling/

Dean of Students Office: www.umass.edu/dean_students/

Faculty and Staff Assistance Program: www.umass.edu/humres/faculty-and-staff-assistance-program

Copyright 2018. University of Massachusetts Amherst