Dear Campus Community,

The past week has been marked by a deeply troubling and painful event that once again challenges the core values of our community. A racist threat was discovered written on a restroom mirror in Melville residence hall. I share the frustration and anger that many of you are experiencing as we continue to confront prejudice and racism.

I assure you that the racially motivated act of hate that occurred last Saturday is being thoroughly investigated by UMPD. We are fully committed to ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for every member of our campus community where we openly confront the challenges before us.

In the immediate aftermath of this incident, our focus was on the community most directly affected. To that end, a notice was sent to the residence hall, a meeting for residents was held and, as is our usual practice, the public-facing UMPD crime log was updated. At the time, I made the conscious decision not to amplify the hateful speech and play into the hands of the hate-monger by sharing news of this incident more widely.

Acts of hate can take many forms and target a range of social identities. Creating a community of dignity and respect requires active engagement. To achieve that aim we have invested in a robust Campus Climate improvement process that provides new opportunities so we can better understand and connect with each other. That includes our Building Bridges initiative and Campus Climate Improvement grants to create relationship-building projects across difference. We will redouble our efforts to make you aware of these many opportunities, and I strongly encourage you to participate. You can learn more at www.umass.edu/diversity.

We must also recognize the importance of unity in defending our values in a contentious national environment. Well-organized, outside groups, often using anonymous methods, seek to provoke division and strife on college campuses. Discerning their involvement in particular incidents is difficult, but we remain vigilant. The best antidote to these hateful acts is to denounce them and stand united, building community bonds that foster excellence and inclusiveness.

As we move forward, I encourage you to gather on Tuesday, October 2 at 5 p.m. with a panel of Afro-American Studies faculty and students who will engage in a thoughtful and intellectually grounded discussion on “The Problem of the Color Line: A Discussion of
Racism and Racial Profiling on Campus.” This event will be held in the Cape Cod Lounge of the Student Union.

Thank you for standing up against these acts that seek to divide us. I stand with you in rejecting hatred and making UMass Amherst a community where all can flourish and succeed.

Sincerely,

Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy

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