To the Xavier Community,

It has been a few weeks since racist images generated by Xavier students were posted on social media. For many of us, the sting of the images has yet to subside. As a University, the images have left a wound that will take much time and attention to heal.

Compounding the impact of these images are divisive and polarizing messages and behavior, directed toward marginalized people, that have been increasing throughout the country, including on college and university campuses since last week's Presidential election. Many of us are disillusioned and filled with sadness and anxiety, and a surprisingly large number of us are also experiencing fear. Unquestionably, civility, tolerance and respect are imminently needed at the University, in the city and across and country. As members of the Xavier community, it is essential that we come together and move forward in a way that demonstrates understanding of and commitment to our mission, which is grounded in cura personalis, care for the person.

Now in my first semester as Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, rejoining the Xavier community after taking several months off, I have become acutely aware how much work there is to do to fulfill the mission for diversity and inclusion. Reporting directly to the President positions me to be more strategic in my work and able to effect change. Among Fr. Graham's assignments this year for me is the creation of a strategic plan for diversity and inclusion. It is a top priority, and now, after the recent release of the climate study report as well as the events of the past three weeks, there is an even greater sense of urgency.

In the meantime, there have been organized and private conversations with students designed to learn about their experiences and concerns as well as join them as companions during these difficult times. Fr. Graham recently met with members of the Black Student Association. He and members of the Senior Executive Team, along with other key leaders and I, have additional meetings planned, including one with Board members, before the end of December. Furthermore, Fr. Graham is preparing another communication to the Xavier community since the racist images were posted; it will be shared within the next few days.

As a way of keeping us all engaged in the work that's ahead of us, I would like to share a couple of immediate needs.

- Significant numbers of students are struggling academically and emotionally from the impact of the recent events. Students, please reach out to faculty and staff for help. Faculty and staff, please reach out to students and offer support. And, faculty and staff, please look out for and lean on each other.
- Some faculty and staff are seeking support but many are also looking for answers to what we can do as a community. Individuals, offices and departments are developing activities, events and programming to address stated and perceived concerns. Please use these opportunities to engage with others in support of our students.

On a more long-term basis, here are several goals that I am exploring for the strategic plan for diversity and inclusion:

- Enhance the recruitment, retention and success of underrepresented students, faculty and staff.
- Provide opportunities for faculty and staff to become more culturally competent and confident in helping students navigate difficult conversations especially in class.
- Incorporate diversity and inclusion across the curriculum for undergraduates from the first year to the senior year.
As has been communicated, the Bias Advisory and Response Team website is being used as a landing page for updates and new information related to the on-campus incidents and our ongoing work. I encourage you to visit that page frequently and feel free to reach out to me directly with questions, concerns or suggestions. BART plans to recommend changes to their protocol and will seek input from the Xavier community via email. Please look for these changes in early January.

As I reflect upon my new role, I feel a tremendous responsibility to help ensure that the campus climate is welcoming, respectful and supportive for all members of the Xavier community. It is our fervent desire that every individual here experiences a deep sense of belonging. Therefore, when actions and behavior inconsistent with our core values personally touch the lives of our students, we cannot sit idly by and allow them to go unaddressed or unchallenged. Our commitment to the mission, fueled by our compassion for each other, calls us to respond. Our response will reveal to us and others who we truly are as a community and define us for years to come.

Privileged to be a member of the Xavier community for more than three decades, I have great faith that we will respond in ways that will make us proud. Not only have many individuals shown enormous concern for our students—and one another—but they have also offered me support in carrying out the important work that lies ahead. Understandably, I am deeply heartened, immensely grateful and absolutely assured that we have the courage and desire to make a better Xavier and in doing so, make a better world.

Sincerely,

Janice

Janice B. Walker, PhD
Assistant to the President and CDIO