



**Northern Illinois
University**

College of Education

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Dear Counseling Community:

Welcome to the fall semester! We hope you had a restorative summer and are feeling ready for the semester ahead. As we begin our classes, we wanted to take a moment to reflect on events in recent weeks – such as the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville and the displays of white supremacy, oppression, discrimination and other inequities around the country. These negative views have implications for us as a community and as current and future professional counselors.

We wish to acknowledge the heightened pain that these events and the resulting discourse might cause you, and reaffirm our commitment to your wellness and growth. First, it is important to take care of yourself and have your needs met. Nobody should be made to feel unsafe, especially in a learning community. Because cultural competence is an ongoing process, many of us might find opportunities for growth in response to these and other events. This will likely require a willingness to listen to the experiences of others, to examine our own behavior with a critical eye, and to stay with any internal discomfort long enough to reach insight and positive action for change.

Part of the mission statement for our master’s program addresses our commitment to developing graduates who “embrace professional ethics, social justice, and advocacy.” This is in alignment with our professional values as stated in the American Counseling Association’s Code of Ethics (2014), which include *honoring diversity and embracing a multicultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts and promoting social justice*. We strive to fulfill the highest expressions of these values and commitments, knowing that we are best able to do this together.

Charlottesville and the aftermath are not the only incidents causing harm to our collective communities and the nation. Advocacy is needed at the local, state, national and international levels to support the mental health and wellness of individuals and families. The work of professional counselors is needed, and we are proud of the work you have already done and will continue to do.

If you are looking for specific action-steps you can take to listen, learn, or educate, consider getting involved in the Counseling Program organizations (Black Counselors Association, NIU ALGBTIC, Chi Sigma Iota, NIUCA). Professional organizations (i.e. Illinois Counseling Association) can also offer support. These groups can provide a sense of community as well as the opportunity for service and personal/professional development. There are many free and members-only resources available through the American Counseling Association at www.counseling.org.

Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow

Northern Illinois University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution.

You may also want to take advantage of the multiple campus-based resources you have at your disposal. These resources include:

- [The Center for Black Studies](#) (815.753.1709)
- [The Gender and Sexuality Resource Center](#) (815.753.4772)
- [The Latino Resource Center](#) (815.753.1986)
- [The Asian American Center](#) (815.752.1177)
- [Counseling and Consultation Services](#) (815.753.1206)
- [Disability Resource Center](#) (815.753.1303)
- [Military and Post-Traditional Student Services](#) (815.753.0691)

Please know that we, your faculty, are resources to you both inside and outside of the classroom. We want to state very clearly: we care about each of you. We believe in you, and want nothing but the very best for you. Your lives and your self-care matter to us. We look forward to seeing you all grow as individuals, as relational beings, and as counselors. We are proud to continue growing alongside you.

Forward, together forward,

The Counseling Faculty

Suzanne Degges-White
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Teresa Fisher

Kimberly Hart
Dana Isawi
Jane Rheineck
Scott Wickman