

June 2, 2020

Dear Maxwell Students, Faculty and Staff,

Like you, I have been angered and saddened by the continued violence against African Americans and people of color in our country.

I'm absolutely sickened by continued racism, police brutality, and the lack of progress in the areas of equality, justice, and access. While we have seen wonderful examples of leadership from ordinary people over the last few days, many of our political leaders have not delivered for our cities, our states, and our country. But I am hopeful because each one of us has the potential to lead and to make a difference - for our generation, for our children, and their children. At the Maxwell School, we must commit to working for a better world for all, regardless of race or ethnicity.

I have watched the continued decline of confidence in institutions, and a resulting loss of confidence in one another. We cannot stand idly by. The Maxwell School calls us to active and engaged citizenship, to work together, to use our words, ideas, and our intellects, and to vote for effective local, state, and national leaders with a commitment to values of democracy, equality, and love of one another.

I know that our students, faculty, and staff genuinely believe in the words inscribed outside the Maxwell Auditorium; we embrace 'leaving what we find better than we found it.' A Maxwell education is all about understanding and confronting complex issues. That knowledge must also be translated, operationalized, and put it into action. And, our passion must be matched by our reason.

As an educator, my goal is to equip students to want to improve the lives of others and work hard to make a difference for the greater good. We must act but recognize how words and actions can be truly divisive. What words and actions will you choose that build in constructive ways? For Maxwell, our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion compels us to tackle uncomfortable and difficult questions, especially around systemic racial inequalities, that led to the outburst of frustration from so many these past few days. This shared commitment is not just in the representativeness of our students, faculty, and staff, but in our courses, what we study, teach, share, research, and how we use that scholarship to inform and change the terms of debate and decision making. Those are actions embedded in a set of values that are concrete and that we must persevere in fulfilling every day.

Thank you for doing your part to help lead in this important work.

Sincerely,



David Van Slyke
Dean