

Dean's Office, College of Education and Social Services

TO: CESS Student Body

FR: Scott Thomas, Dean and Professor

RE: Students - Reaffirming the Mission of the College of Education and Social Services

A wide range of current events, domestic and international, are relentlessly testing our shared values, vision, and mission within the College. These events include heightened incivility, violence directed at the core institutions of our democracy, persistent racism in many of those same institutions, continued normalizing of sexual assault and harassment, the attempted redefinition of constitutionally protected individual identities, and the mistreatment and hostility directed toward immigrants and refugees who have enabled and defined the vibrancy of our country since its inception.

The work of our College has never been more urgent or important. I am hopeful for our future knowing that you have dedicated your time at UVM to study the vital fields represented within the College of Education and Social Services, and their associated professions. Together, in our classrooms, field experiences, service or advocacy roles, and research programs, we engage in the questions underlying the deep challenges to the fabric of our society. Your talent and commitments have and will continue to promote a more humane and just society. I appreciate your deepening creative wisdom and resiliency.

The College's mission is straightforward:

“Our mission is to educate and prepare outstanding professionals in education, social work, and human services; engage in policy-relevant scholarship of the highest quality; and provide exemplary professional service within the state of Vermont, nationally, and globally.

Our actions are designed to promote a more humane and just society, free from oppression, that maximizes human potential and the quality of life for all individuals, families, and communities.”

I ask that you join me, along with the faculty and staff in the College, in reaffirming this mission and our shared commitment to stronger democracy through improving the well-being of the individuals, schools, families, and communities we serve. Our mission is forward-looking, hopeful, and inspiring. It is ours collectively, and it represents the best of us. Undergirding the mission are the values and principles defining our work – the same values and principles that have drawn each of us to this very special College at this point in our lives.

While some may be frustrated or discouraged at times by the events defining our current environment, for our College, this is an opportunity to more deeply and expansively serve and lead. We work together as a scholarly community to shape the skills and abilities of our future leadership – skills and abilities that will distinguish you as alumni of this College. Through you comes our ultimate impact.

Ours is a significant responsibility, one that we must more courageously rise to today and in the weeks, months, and years ahead. This trend will not reverse quickly. We will persevere in our efforts and continue to exercise wisdom in decision-making within the College and across the University. I cannot think of a better group of students with whom to face this most important challenge. Thank you for your continued commitment to the College and our work. You are the stewards of our democracy, and I rest assured knowing that in some small way we will have been part of your journey. More than ever, together, we make a difference.