



Southern Oregon University and our campus culture is dear to all of us. Our campus is a place where diverse backgrounds intersect and where all members of our academic community are supported and respected – as are their thoughtfully shared views on any issues they hold dear. We do not apply religious tests before admitting students or hiring employees, and we do not discriminate against people based on their nationality, race, gender and sexual orientation. Students and employees who come to SOU – whether from Medford or Mexico, Salem or Somalia – all have a right to be treated fairly and to be valued for who they are.

SOU does not stand alone but is part of a larger network of higher education institutions spread across our nation. Many of these universities are stepping forward at this point to reiterate their commitments to liberal education and democracy. For example, President Muriel Howard of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities – of which SOU is a member – has issued a statement asking the Trump Administration to reconsider its recent executive order suspending the U.S. refugee program and banning travel into this country for the citizens of seven Muslim-majority nations.

“America's state colleges and universities have been strengthened by the presence of students and faculty from around the globe, including those from the seven countries specifically targeted by the president's executive order,” President Howard wrote. “We share in the collective commitment to protect our national security while at the same time enriching our nation with invaluable contributions from abroad.”

I share President Howard’s support for diversity – geographic, religious and otherwise. Although SOU has few students from the list of seven countries affected by the executive order, we have many international students who now wonder about their futures in our nation. Thus I want to be clear that **during this period of uncertainty and unrest, as we have throughout the history of our institution, SOU will continue to support all students and employees who wish to learn, grow, and make contributions to our campus and communities.**

Each morning, I walk into Churchill Hall under an inscription that reads, “The problems of democracy are the opportunities of education.” (Joe, please check this quote and correct as necessary.). As we listen to our political leaders disagree about policies and principles and as we watch protestors take to the streets, as we pen our

individual letters to elected officials or otherwise demonstrate our personal political views, it is apparent that our democratic system is being tested. It has been tested before, and it has always emerged from those tests with a new appreciation for both the daunting difficulties and amazing possibilities of self-governance. That self-governance is made possible at least in part by an educated populous and by the schools, colleges and universities that provide that education. Whether we are students, faculty members, support staff or administrators, we are engaged in a serious, vital endeavor. Let us continue that endeavor with renewed commitment, mutual respect, and vigorous care for each other.

Respectfully,

Linda Schott
President, Southern Oregon University