November 9, 2015

Dear Students, Faculty, Staff and Alumni:

The resignation of Tim Wolfe as president of the University of Missouri System this morning was sudden, but the issues surrounding it are not. We live in a greater society that continues to wrestle with systemic racism, social justice and equal opportunity.

The University of Missouri–St. Louis has many guiding principles – none more important than civility, diversity and inclusion. As one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse campuses in Missouri, UMSL is committed to maintaining a climate where all students, faculty, staff and visitors can explore their interests, refine their talents and flourish.

We have sponsored forums, distributed surveys, institutionalized training systems and established committees – all to assess what issues stand in the way of progress and the best remedies to move forward in a positive manner. These types of activities have been ongoing since I arrived at UMSL more than a decade ago and intensified after the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson last year. But we need to do more.

This morning, I asked members of the Chancellor’s Cultural Diversity Council to organize a forum during which members of the UMSL community can express their views and share their ideas about making UMSL better. I will participate in this and other forums and meetings, but do not plan to outline their format or agenda. I believe leaving the details and scheduling to the Council better ensures the openness that will yield the type of results that will benefit us all.

Separately, the UMSL Student Government Association has begun to meet with student groups to gauge the attitude and experience of students from a broad perspective. I have informed SGA President Cameron Roark that I am ready and willing to participate as he and other student leaders see fit.

During this process, we also will reach out to our vast network of alumni … asking them to participate in our forums and discussions. We will ask them to share their views, their advice and their expertise.

As you might expect, I have started receiving phone calls and emails from
varied individuals and groups on and off campus wanting to discuss their experiences and views on this campus and other UM campuses. Some just want to know what comes next. I don’t have a quick fix or answer to all the issues, but I will try to respond as quickly as I can to each and every request to meet or for information.

I think it best at this point to accept President Wolfe’s resignation as an opportunity to talk more – and louder – about longstanding issues … bringing about positive change at UMSL and influencing change in the larger community.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Tom George
Chancellor