



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

## **The UT College of Social Work Stands Up For Inclusion**

The University of Tennessee has been affected by incidents of racism, anti-Semitism, and expressions of intolerance for LGBTQ+ persons, immigrants and Muslims. Negative attitudes and actions against these groups may not be new, but what is different now is the intensity being focused on overt expressions of hate and prejudice. The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* maintains a running catalogue of flagrantly racist incidents on US campuses, and the University of Tennessee has been included on that list twice since January 2018. The FBI has reported a growing number of hate crimes on college campuses from 2015 to 2017, with the largest increases being against multiracial victims, African-Americans, and Jewish people.

As a profession, social work has traditionally led the way in changing conditions that challenge human potential and dignity. The University of Tennessee College of Social Work joins in this long tradition, guided by the principles of our Code of Ethics, to speak out against racism and discrimination.

While prejudice and hate damage the University's reputation, they also injure the students, staff, faculty, and Alumni who consider themselves "Vols for Life." Over 500 faculty and staff members expressed solidarity with Jewish members of our UT community by signing an open letter condemning swastikas painted on The Rock in November 2018. In forums held campus-wide, and at the College of Social Work, students have expressed shock, anger, sadness, and grief over the demeaning "Blackface" social media post by UT students in February 2019. These emotional and psychological reactions endure long after news stories fade and serve to deepen divisions and distrust, because they occur against a backdrop of ongoing "invisible" racism and intolerance that may manifest as jokes, insensitive language, and hidden bias.

What does the evidence say about what can be done to affect change? The Voices of Diversity research project strongly recommended that universities respond to racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, hate speech, and prejudice. For example, Notre Dame University hosts a series called, "Diversity Discussions," and one of their recent events, "Black Lives, Blue Lives, All Lives: Do I Have to Choose Just One" was co-facilitated by the South Bend Indiana Chapter of Black Lives Matter with the support of Notre Dame's University police chief.

The University of Tennessee has crafted an action plan intended to help every student feel like they belong. We support our university's launch of this plan, which features intergroup dialogues, cultural competency training for everyone on campus, and adds "global citizenship" courses for incoming students. UT's efforts are headed in the right direction because they are aligned with the evidence that supports active interventions to combat discrimination.

---

**BIG ORANGE. BIG IDEAS.**

Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System 



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

The profession of social work has a century-long history of doing all we can to address the impact of social problems on the lives of individuals, families, and communities. The call to eliminate racism, hate, and oppression is also deeply rooted in the fact that we are human. Our demand for an end to discrimination goes beyond any one profession, race, gender expression, sexual orientation, political stance, or religion. It is a call that rises out of our common humanity. The greatest example of diversity, inclusion and equity for our students will come from the actions or inactions of their university. Please join us in our pursuit of respect for all, especially for those in our own community at The University of Tennessee.

*Submitted on behalf of the faculty and staff of the College of Social Work, University of Tennessee- Knoxville.*

Interim Dean of the University of Tennessee College of Social Work  
David R. Dupper, PhD

**College of Social Work**

1618 W. Cumberland Avenue Henson Hall Knoxville, TN 37996-3333  
865-974-3351 865-974-4803 fax [www.csw.utk.edu](http://www.csw.utk.edu)

---

**BIG ORANGE. BIG IDEAS.**

Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System 