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Message from the President

Georgia Southern University

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To the University Community:

Over the past few months, people affiliated with Georgia Southern University have used words that are offensive, reprehensible and hurtful. Words matter, and I am simply appalled at how insensitive these individuals have been. I know many of you share my feelings.

As a public institution, we are bound to uphold the Constitution and we cannot prohibit or punish speech that is protected by the First Amendment, including hate speech and other offensive expressions with which we do not agree. When the speech or associated behavior rises to a level where it becomes unprotected speech, we can and will respond with appropriate consequences.

Additionally, we can and will continue to speak out against speech that is hurtful and harmful and to fight ignorance and bigotry through education. All members of our community are an important part of that process, which is why I am asking you to join us for a keynote address by Dr. Damon Williams, a national expert on diversity and inclusion. Dr. Williams will speak on October 26th at 9:30 a.m. in Carter Recital Hall on the Statesboro campus and on November 6th at 10 a.m. in the Ogeechee Theatre on the Armstrong campus.

Please be there — I will be.

Shelley Nickel

Interim President
Georgia Southern University