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Dealing with hate on our campus

Hate is one of the most corrosive and destructive of our primitive instincts. It rises up when we feel weak and abused and when we find ourselves unable to cope with the world around us. When our sense of our own self-worth is at the lowest, we then turn to hate as the last and most self-destructive emotion. Hate builds nothing. Hate destroys. Hate comes from a cowardly refusal to confront the challenges of our world. Hate serves as an excuse for failure. It matters not at all whether the hate comes from whites or blacks, women or men, Catholics or Protestants, Christians or Jews — hate is the same destroyer of achievement and creativity.

The false prophets of hate, who may appear on our campus and elsewhere with the same message, surround themselves with the trappings of power and authority, but they have only the reflected heat of their own fiery rhetoric. Power comes from knowledge, from achievement, from accomplishment, from creativity. Hate knows nothing, it achieves nothing, it accomplishes nothing and it creates nothing. Instead, it consumes the innocent in a self-destructive orgy of reflected anger and rage.

No hate campaign at any time, anywhere succeeds in building a future, although it can destroy many lives in its failure: not the Nazis, not the Ku Klux Klan, not the purveyors of ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, not the false prophets of black or white supremacy. When leaders lack substance, when intellect fails, when analysis collapses and failure looms, those without character fall back on hate for that quick fix. Like any destructive drug, hate gives an instant high, a jolt of emotion and unthinking self-righteous energy. Like all destructive drugs, hate requires more and more until in a wild and mindless fury, it destroys those captured by or victims of its seductive but mindless high.

At the University of Florida, as at every other great university, each generation of students needs to understand for itself what is lost to all of us when we give in to

the cheap, simple, mindless emotion of hate. Students must recognize for themselves what they lose when they accept the destructive messages of false hope provided by hate-mongers. They must find in their own intellectual strength and their own sense of personal competence the power to resist the mindlessness of hate, and they must understand the frustration and hopelessness that permits the constant recurrence of hateful messages in our midst. But in the end, if they have learned anything at all at the University of Florida, they will reject the messages of hate. They will have the intelligence and judgment to separate the hate from the real challenges, injustices and pain that provide the opportunity for hate.

In My Opinion...

UF President John V. Lombardi

We who live the life of the mind, who study human society and behavior and who cherish rational analysis and critical thinking have a special obligation to help each other and our students reject the message of hate wherever it appears. We must help each other understand that hate only produces destruction for all, that hate remains the last refuge of cowards and that hate corrodes everything and everyone it touches.

The University of Florida community will reject any message of hate as it has successfully rejected all other messages of hate that have, from time to time, appeared on our campus. By rejecting hate as a solution, for it is no solution, we create the possibility of identifying problems clearly and changing society effectively. Blinded by hate, we can do nothing but harm ourselves. Rejecting hate and taking direct and effective action based on the critical thinking that is our university's greatest product, we can accomplish much for ourselves and for our dreams.