

Affirmation of Academic Freedom

As we close out the semester, there are a few fundamental principles that we would like to reaffirm for our academic community. There is no higher responsibility at an academic institution than to create and protect an environment conducive to the free conduct of academic research and teaching. We are aware that an op-ed published in *The Daily Mississippian* earlier this semester engendered unintended questions about the validity, integrity, and ethical nature of the scholarship conducted by four of our faculty, the authors of the report from the UM Race Diary Project titled, “Microaggressions at the University of Mississippi.” Since then, some have questioned our institutional commitment to academic freedom.

It is important to make clear that the race diary project was officially approved by our University Institutional Review Board, including the protocol of the study and confidentiality of the participants. The authors of this report worked for more than a year with Vice Chancellor Katrina Caldwell and other administrators to develop a plan that will appropriately use the findings to benefit the university community. We have shared goals. We all want to continue to work to improve how we interact within our community as well as enhance the campus climate for people of color and underrepresented groups, who are the primary targets of microaggressions. We remain committed to that plan and have started that work.

As the administrators within the academic chain for these researchers, we stand behind these faculty members and support the important work they are doing. Moreover, we stand behind all faculty in their pursuit of research, scholarship, and creative achievement. We strongly reaffirm our respective roles in protecting open inquiry, the integrity of scientific research, and the academic freedom of those we work with here on campus. These principles are essential if we are to make progress and expand knowledge, which is a primary role of our academy.

We hope you all have a fulfilling and relaxing holiday season and hope that you come back refreshed. We appreciate and support the work that you do.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jeffrey Vitter, Chancellor

Dr. Noel Wilkin, Provost

Dr. Josh Gladden, Vice Chancellor for Research and Sponsored Programs

Dr. Lee Cohen, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts

Dr. Jeffrey T. Jackson, Chair of Sociology and Anthropology