

Subject: Re: MASSMAIL - Addressing Anti-Semitism
Date: October 10, 2019 at 12:01 PM
To:

The logo features a red block letter 'I' above the word 'ILLINOIS' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below this, the word 'MASSMAIL' is written in a larger, white, sans-serif font, with wide letter spacing. The entire logo is centered on a dark blue rectangular background.

ILLINOIS MASSMAIL

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

I am disheartened to share news of more incidents that challenge our fundamental values of tolerance and inclusion.

On Monday, a swastika was found in the Foreign Languages Building. An investigation has been launched and is on-going.

In addition, concerns were raised about a recent presentation with anti-Semitic content at a staff development program by a Housing student-worker. Housing staff have been meeting individually with all who were present to understand fully the presentation and the nature of the conversations that followed.

I want to state publicly and unequivocally that acts and expressions of anti-Semitism are acts and expressions of hatred and discrimination that are in direct opposition to our core values. Bias and prejudice are antithetical to the educational foundations of our university and hurtful to our entire community. The idea that any individual feels threatened for expression of personal religious or ethnic identity is unacceptable. We will always recognize the rights of those on the campus to safely and freely express their perspectives and opinions. But we will also be ready to condemn statements and actions that violate our shared values and seek to demean, intimidate or devalue others in our community.

This presentation was offered in a regularly scheduled, staff development program on diversity for Housing Resident Advisors that included 11 other student-employees and one full-time staff member. This exercise was part of a university program created to help students learn to share diverse ideas and perspectives that lead to new understanding. Instead of fostering dialogue, it incited division, distrust and anger. The program allowed our students to enter an extremely challenging and potentially volatile situation without the preparation, training, education and professional oversight they needed to succeed. This is inexcusable and unacceptable. This is a failure to our students, and that is my

responsibility.

I apologize to all of our students and to our community. This university promises an experience that prepares students to live, work and lead in a multicultural, diverse and international society. We did not live up to our obligations in this case. We are taking immediate action to ensure that, going forward, our programs and initiatives position our students for success.

Those actions include:

- The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs has initiated an immediate, full review of the hiring, training and professional oversight and management processes of our Resident Advisors and Multicultural Advocates.
- We are instituting anti-Semitism training for all full-time Housing staff, Resident Advisors and Multicultural Advocates. This training will be in place by the end of this semester.
- We will commission an external review of our University Housing multicultural educational programs to help us identify and to implement best practices based on leading national peers.

I want to assure all of our students, staff, faculty and community that we are fully conscious of the seriousness of incidents of anti-Semitism, racism, bias and prejudice on this university. We will continue to track, investigate and address incidents swiftly.

The work of creating an inclusive environment is everyone's responsibility. I am committed to continuing to work with faculty, students and staff to create a positive climate.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Jones
Chancellor

This mailing approved by:
Office of the Chancellor

sent to:
Everyone