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Response to Chancellor's announcement on diversity and inclusion training for all faculty, staff and students

No one is being shot or killed on our campus, as they have been elsewhere in our country or in Ferguson, Missouri. But Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin has made a bold step toward helping the entire Mizzou community become aware of the spirit-murder that occurs regularly in race relations in Columbia. Too often misconceptions about race, fueled by fear, obfuscate understanding about the one race to which we all belong: the human race.

The Chancellor's approach complements the long-term work our Faculty Council Race Relations committee began earlier this year. Our 12 members are developing strategies specifically aimed at assisting faculty. The Chancellor's announcement responds directly to recent events of explicit racism on campus and it responds to the call by Missouri Student Association President Payton Head, after he was assaulted by racist slurs, who said: 'It's time to wake up, Mizzou.'

It's vital that in positive ways we initiate our incoming students to essential practices of racial respect, that we teach them as well as faculty, administrators and staff about the complexity of the social constructs of race.

Especially since tragic events and violence occurred in Ferguson, groups of Mizzou students, faculty and staff have protested about a climate of exclusion and disrespect at Mizzou and beyond. We are not alone in this struggle about racial respect on campus: University of Oklahoma, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of California at Berkeley, Columbia University, University of Alabama, University of Mississippi and University of Southern California provide recent examples.

As part of that struggle, we need to understand our Mizzou history, how we can learn lessons from it to improve in race relations, including recruiting, supporting, and retaining faculty, students, administrators and staff of color.

And I ask provocative questions: What can each of us do today to make Mizzou a safe and welcoming place? What can we do to make Mizzou a local, national and global leader in race relations in terms of teaching, service, research and economic development?