

Dear members of the university community:

I am reaching out to share an important message about a serious situation that has generated media interest today. To our Danforth campus students, I know this repeats a message that Lori White shared on my behalf earlier. I want everyone to hear from me directly.

You may be aware of news reports about an extremely unfortunate incident that occurred on July 7 at a nearby restaurant in Clayton where 10 of our incoming first-year students — men and women, all of whom are African American — had just eaten. As they walked back to MetroLink, they were stopped by Clayton police who were responding to an alert that patrons had left the restaurant without paying. Based on a description of the alleged perpetrators as "four young black men," the police wrongly suspected our students. Our students then returned to the restaurant — even after producing paid receipts — where the management immediately confirmed that they were not the individuals involved.

I want to be very clear. This situation is unacceptable. It runs counter to our university's core values of mutual respect, understanding and inclusion. We will not tolerate this kind of behavior on our own campuses and we expect it will be addressed appropriately elsewhere.

As soon as we heard from our students about what had transpired, we immediately met with City of Clayton leaders to intervene on behalf of our students. Those efforts continue. Our expectation is that our students will hear directly from the City of Clayton for both an explanation and an apology.

Incidents like this cause damage to the reputation of the entire St. Louis region. As residents and as a significant contributor to moving the region forward, we understand that — in response — we have to redouble our efforts to build a community where all feel welcome. Every one of us has a role and responsibility in achieving that goal.

For your information, attached is the statement we shared publicly today.

Sincerely,
Mark S. Wrighton
Chancellor