



**UPSTATE**  
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

EDUCATION · HEALTHCARE · RESEARCH

*Office of the President & Health System CEO*

Jan. 15, 2018

To the Upstate Community:

Celebrating our History and Heritage

In the months of January and February 2018, we have the opportunity to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. national Day and Black History month. These two annual events represent our celebration of our collective history and our joint heritage as Americans. Joining our native American indigenous nations, the rest of us—all immigrants—are the visible tapestry of the history of the United States. As your President, I celebrate my own heritage as a Haitian-American with the honor to lead this health science university dedicated to science and service.

My colleagues, we are in challenging times. In this increasingly globalized environment and the diversity of our country, we have key choices before us. We know that our history is complicated in its integration of immigrant groups. Often the reaction has been an immediate one of rejection--of a posturing of "us versus them"--signaling xenophobia and disrespect. Our complicated history has seen the near elimination of our indigenous roots, slavery, and voluntary migration of individuals from all around the world for a variety of reasons ranging from seeking religious freedom, economic and work opportunities, freedom from oppression and torture, refuge from disasters, learning and professional opportunities, cultural expansion and others--and distinct from any other country, we have stated that all of those reasons are not only legitimate but welcomed reasons for joining the American story. The complicated fabric of our neighborhoods, towns, cities and nation have led to discussions regarding immigration policy and determining the status of those brought to the United States as children (undocumented), and those fleeing their own country but arriving undocumented to the United States.

As a university, a place of learning, committed to the use of knowledge to improve lives, my position as your President is clear. I stand with our Haitian, Salvadorian, African colleagues/students and indeed all those from around the world who come to the United

States because I recognize the strength of diversity and inclusion. I support continuation of the opportunity offered by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and a path

to citizenship and refute policies that limit educational opportunities, disparage populations and perpetuate injustice. I believe in a just world that offers every child and adult the opportunity to reach their full potential. I celebrate multi-lingual and multi-cultural perspectives. I celebrate all of us in cities, rural places—those who have been here for generations and those who are newly arrived. It is our humanity and sense of justice that will prevail. I am proud to be part of a larger public higher education system that espouses these same values and invite you to be vocal and active in pursuit of our core values.

Thank you for being a part of Upstate Medical University.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Danielle Laraque-Arena', with a large, stylized initial 'D' and a long horizontal stroke.

Danielle Laraque-Arena, MD, FAAP  
President & Health System CEO  
SUNY Upstate Medical University