



Nov. 7, 2023

To the Upstate community:

These are terrible times with a seemingly endless spate of terror, brutality, wars, hate, injustice and untold deaths of innocent people across the world and on our streets at home. SUNY Chancellor King has forcefully condemned the horrific Hamas terrorist attack and clearly stated that there is no tolerance of antisemitism or Islamophobia or any kind of hate within the SUNY system. We are emphatically committed to this at Upstate as well.

I believe—as some university Presidents do—in the principle first enunciated in 1967 that a President should not make political statements or take sides. A president cannot speak for all the students, faculty and staff. “The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic. It is... a community of scholars.” (University of Chicago’s Kelvan report on the University’s role in political and social action, 1967. [Read full report here.](#))

But a President must listen. I have heard from and spoken with a large number of students, faculty, staff, alumni—thank you for reaching out to me—and know that all of us are struggling with feelings of horror, fear, anxiety, anger, helplessness, hurt and grief. As someone who cares deeply about each of you, I struggle with how to respond to support and soothe. As a physician, I search for a remedy and I find none that are adequate. As President, I struggle to go beyond mere words to maintain the highest ideals of Upstate as a reliably safe, caring university community which has a centuries-long tradition of welcoming everyone.

In all this soul searching, what I have repeatedly found is your persistent respect of one another. You have joined me in celebrating so many colleagues with different life experiences, political opinions, ideologies and beliefs. You yourself have enriched us by presenting your views with clarity, passion, and civility. This has allowed us to understand and respect each other despite our differences. Every moment, I ask myself: What do we need to do now to

prevent these sharpened, emotionally charged differences from destroying our safe community with fear and hatred?

As I have done every time we faced a major challenge, I am asking each one of you to reach for your highest ideals, to be the best we can be, to come together and do more of what has made us special, and to respect and heal. There are already many examples happening around us:

—People have reached out to check in on colleagues who are on the other side of a divide.

—A cross section of students and faculty attended an event and were appreciative of being able to be together.

—A respected faculty leader sent this note to his department:

“We are fortunate to be able to take comfort in the expectation that our Department community will not tolerate acts of antisemitism, Islamophobia and other hate crimes toward colleagues, trainees, patients or research subjects, regardless of political views, background and beliefs, and that differences in opinion and ideology are handled in a non-threatening, respectful and validating manner. To this end, let’s all be acutely aware of our own thoughts and feelings and those of others who are struggling during this time of extreme stress in the world.”

I believe that each person must be cherished and valued in order for us to have a special Upstate. We are challenged as never before to fulfill this ideal, to maintain the safe embrace of a university of learning and healing, and to protect our freedoms, safety and comfort.

The coming months will continue to be difficult; sadly, they will be filled with anguish and grief and many provocations, including on our campus. Let’s be clear that, when an event is held by a student or faculty group on our campus, it does not mean that I or Upstate agrees with or endorses the views expressed during the event or the people featured during the event. Rather, it means that Upstate respects its obligations under the law as a public university subject to the requirements of the First Amendment. The First Amendment affords each of you, within certain legal limits, the right to assemble and express your views. We will vigorously enforce SUNY and Upstate’s code of conduct and policies to ensure that this is done as fairly and justly as possible, and above all else, to ensure safety for all. In this regard, let me remind you that all activities and gatherings must be vetted and approved through the standard Upstate process.

While we may have different life experiences and strong beliefs, we must not allow these differences to sow hatred in our hearts. We must ensure that despite vastly differing opinions, we remain respectful of each other and confront our differences in a respectful way. I hope this will lead to a better understanding, even if not to agreement.

I would also like to remind you of the many resources listed below that we have on our campus for anyone in distress or needing support. Please use these services and please do take care of yourself.

Finally, I continue to believe, as I have often stated, in an Upstate family that is made up of people who are special. I believe in you—you have made us a better medical university because you live the ideals of a great university and fulfill the even higher calling of a healing community. As in the past, I put my trust in you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mantosh Dewan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Mantosh Dewan, MD
President, SUNY Upstate Medical University
SUNY Distinguished Service Professor

Services for students:

—[Student Counseling Center](#), 719 Harrison St., first floor, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Building. How it works: Students interested in services will have an initial consultation with a staff psychologist. Further recommendations will be based on that meeting and may include ongoing counseling through Student Counseling. Counseling can help students address a variety of concerns, including stress management, adjustment difficulties, anxiety and relationship problems. 315-464-3120.

—[Student Affairs Support Services](#). 315-464-4816. There are many offices and functions that exist solely to support students and to help facilitate student achievement. The resources linked above highlight such services.

Services for employees, residents include:

—[Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#), located at Upstate Community Hospital, Room 0276. EAP is a voluntary program designed to offer a highly professional, confidential source of help for people with personal problems or concerns to include but are not limited to emotional, family, work stress, legal, financial, grief, change-related, marital/relationship, alcohol/ drug or domestic violence problems. 315-492-5296.

—Individual health insurance plans may also offer wellbeing services. For example, Empire Plan as of July 1 now offers Talkspace, a new online therapy option. The Empire Plan, in partnership with Talkspace, brings convenient online therapy, counseling and medication services to enrollees and their dependents. Talkspace therapists specialize in stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance use, identity struggles, trauma, grief and more. For more information and to get started, visit <https://www.talkspace.com/empireplan> to register.

Services for students, employees and residents include:

—[Wellness Resource Line](#), which is available 24/7 to help provide people with resources to support medical, physical, emotional, professional, safety, and spiritual wellbeing. The service is confidential. Call 315-464-KARE or 4-KARE. Assistance is also available via email

at 4kare@upstate.edu Additional wellness offerings can be found here: <https://www.upstate.edu/wellness/index.php>.

—[Department of Spiritual Care at 315 464-4687](#). Key services provided include spiritual support in times of crisis and change of health condition.

—[Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#). 315-464-5234 This office works with all members of Upstate's campus to ensure a campus environment that respects and values the diversity of all who work, learn and receive care here.

—[Office of Institutional Equity](#). 315-464-5238 This office is responsible for receiving and investigating all complaints of discrimination and harassment towards any member of the campus community based on a protected class, including race, color, national origin, citizenship and immigration status, religion, age, disability, sex, gender, pregnancy, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, transgender status, predisposing genetic characteristics, marital status, familial status, veteran status, military status, domestic violence victim status, criminal conviction record, and any other category protected under state, federal, or local law

—[University Police](#) work to ensure Upstate is a safe place for all who come here to work, learn, visit and receive care. If individuals feel unsafe and want to report any suspicious activity, they should call University Police at 315-464-4000. Campus safety escorts are also available by calling 315-464-4000 (Downtown) and 315-492-5511 (Community).

These and other resources can also be accessed via the wellness webpage, [Wellness | SUNY Upstate](#)