

June 6, 2020

Open Letter to College of Agriculture and K-State Research and Extension Students, Faculty and Staff

Dear College of Ag and KSRE Family,

Unfortunately, the timeliness of my message today lags with respect to unfolding events nationally, locally on social media at #BlackatKState, and via other outlets. One of my shortcomings, it seems, is the inertia of moving thoughts from my heart, through my fingers and on to paper. My sincere apologies for that.

University campuses should rightly be expected to be a place of hope. Every year, a new group of eager students arrives and another group graduates. And each academic cycle, we anticipate all the wonderful things they will accomplish, how their education will give them greater opportunity and how the world will be a better place because they are present in it.

George Floyd's killing exposed once again, that for many, those opportunities may be out of reach, that even hope may be unrealistic for some simply because of the color of their skin. The recent events at Lafayette Square underscore, in high relief, the challenges of advancing these principles of equality and justice, even in a free society. It is horrific to contemplate, but it is real. It reminds us that incremental positive change must constantly be reinforced and nurtured because the forces that work to reverse that change are ever present and powerful. However, we must never be paralyzed by the enormity and difficulty of the challenge.

So, we ask ourselves as teachers, advisors, researchers, Extension professionals and advocates for ALL associated with this College and K-State Research and Extension – what is our role in bringing about change? What can we in higher education do to create a more just society, heal wounds, and pull our country and indeed our global family together?

As the College of Agriculture and K-State Research and Extension, we help shape students who go out into the world; we create new knowledge for the benefit of the world; and we interact with the public to translate new knowledge into actions and behaviors for the benefit of the world. It is our responsibility to carry out those actions to re-shape the world in a way in which all people enjoy the same opportunities, realize their dreams, are treated with dignity, and feel safe no matter their ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. As I watch the peaceful protests of people of all races and backgrounds, young and old coming together, I feel a new

sense of hope that the words “equal justice for all” will inspire new strength in all of us to act and speak against ALL forces of “unequal justice for all.”

Today, nearing the completion of my first year as dean of the College of Agriculture and director of K-State Research and Extension, I renew my commitment to being intolerant of intolerance; measuring our success by the success of all of our students, faculty and staff; and ensuring all of us feel warmly welcomed and safe as we learn and work as a part of our College of Agriculture and K-State Research and Extension family.

I am a 65-year-old white man and do not have all the answers. I must continue my own life-long journey of growth in understanding of what justice and equality for all people truly means. As such, I will work through our Diversity Programs Office and Dr. Zelia Wiley to strategize in shaping appropriate actions that follow.

As we move forward with compassion, justice and equality as our guideposts, we will emerge as better citizens of the world. These fundamental tenants must be part of the fabric that binds us as K-State family in the College of Agriculture and K-State Research and Extension. As we undertake these efforts, together, we will maintain open and honest channels of communication and engagement. I look forward to us all growing in our understanding of what it means to truly have “justice for all.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Ernest Minton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and "M".

J. Ernest Minton
Dean, College of Agriculture
Director, K-State Research and Extension