From: Adam Bradford  
Sent: Friday, June 19, 2020 3:14 PM  
To: gradmemos@isummm.edu; graduate_faculty@mm.isu.edu  
Subject: For ISU Grad Students -- Some Thoughts and a Challenge

Dear Idaho State University Graduate Students,

Earlier this month, the President and Vice-Presidents of the university distributed a letter to the entire university entitled “Confronting Hate, Racism, and Bigotry” in which he reiterated the values that we espouse as a university community. In his letter, he spoke of how here, at ISU, we “strive to eradicate hate, racism, and bigotry” and proclaimed the ideal that “our university values diversity and inclusion and the richness that many identities bring into our lives”. If you haven’t already, please do read President Satterlee’s message. I cannot echo it loudly enough, nor state any more emphatically than has been done there that these are the values that we espouse in the Graduate School. We believe deeply that we multiply our strengths as a people, as a community, as an institution, and as a nation when we recognize and honor the inestimable value of every human being – and that starts here, in our local community.

I have thought much, over the last several days, about the challenges that our community, our state, and our nation face – and I have thought about you, in the context of those challenges. This is why I am writing today -- to share what I hope are welcome thoughts, and to leave you with a challenge. First, if you are receiving this email, it means that you enjoy an opportunity that most never will. You are among the educated elite – considering that our best estimates suggest that less than 1% of the world’s total population will ever possess the amount of learning and education that you do now. This is a rare privilege that I know many of you have worked extremely hard to enjoy, and I commend you for that. But I also want to challenge you to realize that this privilege means that you shoulder a significant responsibility to use that privilege on behalf of those that will never enjoy it. The pandemic that has ravaged so many communities, and the social injustice that has plagued our history and our contemporary moment, are combining in the present to devastating effect. If we have been successful in creating the type of education that we espouse to at Idaho State University, then you will recognize that the skills and abilities that you have cultivated through your graduate education can be brought to address these challenges – and you will recognize the moral imperative that exists for you and for all of us that have been fortunate enough to receive such an education to work for the benefit of those around you. This is the challenge that I write to articulate to you today. Recognize that I am not issuing this challenge to you as much as our contemporary circumstances are. I urge you to embrace it and recognize that you can be a powerful and positive instrument for addressing these challenges. For instance, our humanists and social scientists understand better than most the long legacy of cultural and racial oppression that still haunts us today – how can that understanding be brought to bear in your work, your lived experience, and your interactions with others, to help move us from where we are now to where we need to be? How can it help cure the long persistent ills that still plague us? Our scientists and health professionals understand better than most what is needed to confront the challenges of the current contagion and how we can resist its spread and preserve human life – how can that understanding be mobilized to help us find medical cures, and also help us to best embrace the social practices we need to in order to weather this pandemic and save precious lives in the process. In our lifetimes, we have arguably never needed all of our disciplines more. The challenges I’ve articulated above are not the only ones we face – the list is unquestionably longer. But when I think about who can
help us identify the solutions to these problems, I think of you. Do you think of yourself in such a way? If not, I would urge you to reconsider and to recognize that your education has given you powerful tools that will allow you to be a force for good in this world. How will you use the privileges that you have been given? How will you use the powerful educational experiences that you have had and are having, to honor the moral imperative such education requires of you -- to improve the world as best you can, to leave it a better place than you found it, to do what you can in the space in which you operate to heal it and make it a more just, equitable, and vibrant place? I cannot give you the answer to these questions – but when you find them, and when you have coupled those answers with corresponding actions to make them a reality, you will have honored the education you have been given and you will have fulfilled the moral imperative that we all collectively share. I look forward to seeing you do so, and have a deep and abiding faith in the idea that you will.

Best,

Adam

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