

Feb. 26, 2002

TO: The University Community

FROM: President Thomas H. Jackson and Provost Charles E. Phelps

Several recent incidents of hateful graffiti and vandalism, directed at specific groups of individuals, are appalling and antithetical to the values of an academic institution. These incidents should be condemned broadly by members of our community.

Free inquiry, and therefore speech, is essential to our core values and purposes. This is true whether the inquiry involves sensitive, controversial, or even painful topics and issues for members of the community (or broader world). But the purpose of such free inquiry and speech is to add to our intellectual understanding of complex issues. As leaders of an institution dedicated to intellectual pursuits and understanding, we also maintain our own free speech rights to condemn incidents such as have occurred on our campus, that under no possible pretense add to that intellectual pursuit—and we do so in the strongest possible terms. These actions are an expression of unreasoned hatred, which tears at the community values that this University also holds dear.

It is important that all members of our campus community join us in making it unmistakably clear that this destructive venom has no place in our academic institution.