

*August 15, 2024*

Dear Colleagues:

As leaders of Johns Hopkins University, we are often called upon in the face of global, national, or local occurrences to issue public statements on behalf of the institution. These requests are usually grounded in a sense of connection to the values and purpose of our university and our common humanity, and on the occasions when we have issued such statements, we have attempted to choose our topics and words carefully.

In recent years, requests for institutional statements have increased in frequency. The subjects upon which we have been urged to speak have varied widely—human rights violations, acts of discrimination, changes in health regulations, incidents of targeted violence, military conflicts, and natural disasters, among others, have led to calls for a university statement. Often those seeking such statements want us to identify and condemn the actors whom they regard as principally responsible. In other cases, those seeking statements simply desire an expression of concern or sympathy for the persons directly affected by the incident in question. However, we must recognize that taking institutional positions can interfere with the university's central commitment to free inquiry and obligation to foster a diversity of perspectives within our academic community.

As is the case with many of our peers, we have been weighing the value, appropriateness, and limitations of such institutional statements. We—as university leaders and deans—have arrived at a strong commitment to make institutional statements only in the limited circumstances where an issue is clearly related to a direct, concrete, and demonstrable interest or function of the university.

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cases we are likely to face. We acknowledge that the line between those issues that implicate a core interest of the university and those where the impact is less direct is not always easily drawn. But the inevitability of hard cases is not an argument against the approach we are adopting, which we believe will address the lion's share of cases that typically confront the university. Against this benchmark, for instance, a decision by governm

and boundless discovery of our colleagues. The project of the university as an institution is to create the conditions for that exploration, discovery, and engagement, even for controversial or disquieting ideas. Against that overarching and foundational goal, we believe that the policy of restraint to which we are now committing ourselves is timely, principled, and critical for the continuing relevance and mission of our university.

Sincerely,

Ron Daniels,  
President

Ray Jayawardhana,  
Provost

Fred Bronstein,  
Dean of the Peabody Institute

Christopher S. Celenza,  
James B. Knapp Dean of the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences

Theodore L. DeWeese,  
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