

Dean's Response to Important Faculty Issue

1 message

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To the students, faculty, and staff of the Kelley School,

As many of you may be aware Professor Eric Rasmusen, a member of the Kelley School faculty, tweeted a link and quoted from an article entitled, "*Are Women Destroying Academia? Probably*," written by Lance Welton. This article suggests women academics and most women students are harmful to the academy. Unfortunately, the views espoused in this article and endorsed by this professor on the matter of gender diversity reflect similar views expressed in his private Twitter account. Moreover, he holds similarly reprehensible views regarding other areas of diversity. The professor demonstrates a lack of tolerance and respect for women as well as for racial diversity and diversity in sexual orientation. The leadership of the Kelley School stands united in condemning the bias and disrespect displayed by this professor; we find his sexist, racist, and homophobic views abhorrent.

The Kelley School believes strongly in the importance and value of diversity and inclusion. There are hundreds of research articles clearly stating the value of diversity for all learning environments including higher education. Both for this reason and because valuing and fostering diversity is the right thing to do, our School has worked to create a welcoming environment for all professors and staff to pursue our teaching, research, and service missions in an open, receptive, and respectful environment. Similarly, we have worked diligently to create an open, respectful, and inclusive environment in which our students learn. Naturally, it is hurtful when we see views expressed that are the antithesis of this. As a female academic, dean of the school, and a Kelley alumna who cares deeply about our School, I find the remarks and the beliefs presented in the papers cited and tweets by this professor reprehensible.

While many have called for the professor's dismissal, there are legal reasons why the University cannot dismiss him over his postings. Like all of us, Professor Rasmusen has First Amendment rights. While his stated opinions are at odds with our individual values and beliefs and those of our institution, we cannot prohibit his freedom of expression in his private social media accounts. This does not mean that we are powerless to take actions that prevent bias against students, other faculty members, or staff. Indiana University and the Kelley School are committed to our ethical responsibility to provide a workplace free from discrimination and harassment. In addition, we must ensure a non-threatening, fair learning environment. Therefore, we will take all necessary steps to ensure that students will not be harmed by the biases that could underlie the judgment of this professor. This includes allowing students who are enrolled in his courses to substitute other courses or transfer to other sections taught by different professors. We will also implement other procedural mechanisms to ensure the biases expressed do not impact the professor's grading or how he conducts his classroom sessions. And, we will conduct a thorough review of the courses taught by this professor for the influence of bias.

I ask that you not judge our School by a single faculty member. For 100 years, we have been a learning environment that cares deeply about our research, teaching and service missions. For 100 years, we have been a learning environment that cares deeply about our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. And, we are a learning environment that will strive every day to be more inclusive and supportive of diversity than the day before.

Each of us brings a valuable aspect of diversity that gives our institution strength. I hope we can remember this even when we are challenged by others whose minds are closed to this viewpoint.

Idie Kesner
Dean of Kelley School