

## Message from the Department of Nutrition Leadership Regarding Silent Sam

On the “Recommendation for the Disposition and Preservation of the Confederate Monument”\*

On December 3, 2018, the UNC Board of Trustees along with Chancellor Carol Folt released their report to be presented to the UNC Board of Governors, in accordance with the formal request by the Board of Governors for a plan for the “disposition and preservation” of the Confederate Monument known as Silent Sam. In summary, the report begins with “our preference is to relocate the Artifacts to a secure off-campus location”. The report goes on to say that “While we acknowledge that relocation to an off-campus location such as a museum does not comply with the current law, our public safety concerns make it important for us to continue discussions concerning this avenue, even while moving forward with developing and seeking approval for an on-campus plan which follows.” Many are glad that removal of Silent Sam from our campus was the first preference of the Board of Trustees. However, reactions to the planned “University History and Education Center” that would contextualize the long and complicated history at UNC, including but not limited to display of the Confederate Monument, include tremendous disappointment, sorrow, and frustration. In particular, frustration lies with the current political impasse and limited options afforded by the state. However, it is not impossible that, by the time the Center is built, laws could change to provide alternatives to the fate of Silent Sam.

Here in the Department of Nutrition, we recognize and respect that reactions to the plan are complex and are not uniform across various constituencies in our school and in the community. Earlier this week, we entered the holiday season with a multi-cultural feast that celebrated the traditions and cultures represented across our students, staff and faculty, all as an expression of inclusion, which we hold as a critical value for our department. To continue our endeavor to advance an inclusive community environment, we are working with student leaders from the department to organize an approach in which all will be invited to freely express their impressions regarding Silent Sam. In addition, we will follow up on our plan from earlier this fall to hold a second Open Forum, focused on inclusion broadly, to continue the conversation soon after the New Year.

We understand that the timing of the release of the report as determined by the Board of Governors deadline, was highly problematic for our students who are in the midst of final exams and due dates for final projects. We also are aware that some faculty around campus are considering various actions in protest of the plan, such as not submitting grades, as an expression of their displeasure with the report. For Nutrition, we are dedicated to the support of our students which includes uninterrupted academic work. We therefore will proceed with all of the planned events and activities, including completion of all of the tasks required as we complete this semester, as we normally do. We support and encourage all to think deeply about their own reaction regarding Silent Sam, to speak and act with clarity of thought and civility, and to use this moment in time as an opportunity to re-imagine and re-dedicate ourselves to a more inclusive community beginning here in our own Chapel Hill.

With hopes for a better tomorrow,

Beth Mayer-Davis, PhD, Cary C Boshamer Distinguished Professor and Chair, Department of Nutrition

Melinda Beck, PhD, Professor and Associate Chair for Academics, Department of Nutrition

Raz Shaikh, PhD, Associate Professor and Associate Chair for Research, Department of Nutrition

Jonathan Earnest, MA, Academic Coordinator, Department of Nutrition

\*This statement does not speak for the Gillings School of Global Public Health, nor for the University