

Dear UNI Students:

We, the faculty of the University of Northern Iowa, welcome every one of you as a respected member of our community. We will continue to work to support all students' growth during your time here, understanding that you each have your own needs, values, goals, and dreams. Our job is to help all of you thrive.

Different students require different things to grow. The neurodivergent student, the student with a learning disability, the student with a serious illness, the student with a mental health challenge, the first generation student, the low income student, the military veteran, the member of a religious minority, the student who is a parent, the survivor of violence, the student of color, the LGBTQIA+ student--this list is not exhaustive--all have specific needs as learners. The university has a responsibility for helping to meet those needs. We, the faculty, cannot meet each student's every need, but we affirm our responsibility to work with you as individuals, supporting you in meeting your specific challenges in our courses and on our campus.

The college experience is not just a set of assignments; it's a process, and we respect the efforts you make over the course of that process. We see the courage it takes to stand up and give a presentation, or participate in a classroom discussion. We see the resilience it takes to revise an essay. We see the persistence it takes to learn material that doesn't seem to make any sense at first. We see the long hours you work to support yourselves financially. We see the efforts you make to be good friends, family members, and members of your communities. We understand that sometimes the effort it takes just to get out of bed and get to class is itself hard work. We know that some of your specific circumstances demand extraordinary courage and resilience; we are here for you.

A public university education is, in part, an education in citizenship: an education in working with others who are different from ourselves, whom we respect as equals, and with whom we share a future in a particular place--in our case, the state of Iowa. Democracy depends on citizens who can work together without all being the same, or agreeing on everything--this, in part, is what diversity means. Democracy depends on citizens who recognize that while we are different, we can still treat one another as equals--this, in part, is what equity means. Democracy depends on citizens who work to make sure all persons can play a meaningful part in the process of shaping our shared future--this, in part, is what inclusion means. We will continue to offer students an education in citizenship because it is an essential part of the work of a public university, and essential to a healthy democracy.

In respectful solidarity,

The Faculty Senate of the University of Northern Iowa

(Approved January 22, 2024)