

**A Statement of the National Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities
of The United Methodist Church**
2 February 2015

We the members of the National Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities of the United Methodist Church (NASCUMC) express our deep concern regarding the violence and pain in our contemporary culture, both inside the church and in the larger society. We have witnessed, and we continue to witness, a world of racially charged violence, the suicides of young people condemned for their sexual orientation or gender identity, escalation in human trafficking and domestic abuse, rancorous political debate, and polarization within the church. As members of NASCUMC, we do not interpret societal issues with one mind, but we share a compassionate heart. Together we bear witness to our common concern for indignities in our global society and the urgency for the church and church-related institutions to witness in words and actions to the dignity of all human beings. As United Methodist-related institutions, we also bear witness to the “catholic spirit” of the Wesleyan tradition and the larger Christian tradition, interpreted in relation to our contemporary context, and the recognition of God-given grace in every human life.

We commit ourselves as educational institutions related to the United Methodist Church to give leadership on behalf of social justice and human dignity by developing new patterns and practices of communication and by attending to questions of justice within our own institutions. We dedicate the years 2015 and 2016 to *Heralding Our Commitment to Justice and Dignity*. In so doing, we are guided by the core humanistic and religious value that all persons are of sacred worth and equal standing. We welcome students to our campuses regardless of their race or ethnicity, their creed, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. We encourage the free exchange of ideas and therefore recognize that diversity of backgrounds, values, and viewpoints is essential for rich conversation and sound learning. We promote a vision of life in which people are judged by the content of their character and not their skin color, their gender, their sexual orientation, or any of the other artificial barriers used to devalue some of God’s children.

We as leaders of United Methodist related schools, colleges, and universities commit ourselves to foster an educational environment in which honest differences are honored. We recognize that every institution exists in a different context, and the issues we face are different. Every institution attempts to support the life of all people, and we all fall short of the policies and practices of which we are capable. Thus, it is important for us to assume our roles as educational institutions and to give leadership in significant conversations and in active evaluation and revision of institutional policies and practices. To those ends, we commit ourselves to two particular actions between March 1, 2015 and December 31, 2016:

- (1) **Conversations that Matter about Matters that Matter:** Each participating institution will sponsor a series of conversations on concerns of justice and dignity within its distinctive context – concerns that are subject to diverse and strongly held perspectives. The purpose of these conversations is to learn to communicate with dignity across human differences – a process that includes genuine sharing, listening, and considering what others say.
- (2) **Institutional Action:** Each institution will also assess its own institutional practices and then take explicit action to prioritize and reshape its policies and institutional culture to foster more fully the dignity of all people. These actions will include policies that address the health and wellbeing of all persons regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender preference, social class, and other aspects of human difference.

Adopted unanimously by the NASCUMC members attending the semiannual meeting of the organization in a plenary session in Washington, D.C., on February 2, 2015.