Hello Colleagues,

As members of the University Curriculum Committee, we wanted to reach out to you as you think about establishing and maintaining relationships with your students. Many MSU students have expressed concerns about unfolding events at MSU and beyond. While we recognize that we, as faculty, may have few answers for our students, we can make our courses places where students can connect with each other, raise questions and concerns, and, through faculty, bring these issues to the attention of the administration. We the committee believe that personal integrity, human values, and ethical conduct constitute the unifying foundation of our entire curriculum, on which individual disciplines grow and branch off. Therefore, courteous and honest exchange of opinions should be a part of any class curriculum. It is also understood, as faculty, we are responsible for the curriculum, and the ultimate decision on whether and how to address these questions rests with individual instructors.

Many faculty members have already begun to have conversations with their students about MSU’s response to victims of sexual harassment and abuse, about the recent changes in leadership, and about MSU’s reputation in the wider world. We want to commend these efforts and encourage others to think about ways to create spaces for your students to speak. Students may have wide-ranging concerns from worry over whom to safely approach if they feel endangered on campus to concerns about how to answer questions about the university while interviewing for jobs and internships. We encourage faculty members to make space for these conversations in ways that feel comfortable for them and their students.

Some strategies that have worked for colleagues include:

- Engaging in informal conversations before or after class
- Inviting students to visit during office hours for extended conversations
- Opening up conversations in class about current events -- either in small groups or as a class
- Asking students if they would like to talk about or make announcements for various campus events, such as marches or town halls
- Providing opportunities for students to talk about how events at MSU (and beyond) are impacting their lives

We recognize that some faculty will be more comfortable with these conversations than others and that some disciplines may lend themselves more to these sorts of conversations, but we hope that all faculty members will think broadly about how to provide an educative and supportive environment for our students.

Respectfully,
The University Committee on Curriculum