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CAMPUS NEWS

## Tripathi establishes interim policy for student art projects

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Read President Satish K. Tripathi's open letter to UB students.  
[<http://www.buffalo.edu/president/from-the-president/communications/spectrum-update-2.html>]

Student art projects installed on campus outside the Center for the Arts now must include a notation or explanatory identifier stating it is a work of art, according to a new interim operating procedure established by President Satish K. Tripathi.

Tripathi announced the new procedure, to remain in effect until a College of Arts and Sciences' committee can develop a formal policy, in a Dec. 11 letter to The Spectrum updating students on actions the university continues to take in response to the controversial student art project.

As part of a class project — developed for the graduate course “Installation: Urban Space” (Art 562) offered by the Department of Art — student Ashley Powell posted several signs reading “White Only” and “Black Only” on Sept. 16 outside bathrooms and above drinking fountains on the North Campus.

University Police immediately removed five signs in Clemens Hall after receiving several complaints; other signs were removed by members of the university community. Some students immediately expressed outrage about the signs on social media. Many were unaware the signs were an art project. Some have advocated for a university policy regarding the display of artwork in public spaces on campus.

Tripathi noted in his letter to students that current university policy already requires that the placement of art projects in public areas on campus be reviewed by Environment, Health and Safety for safety and security issues.

He stressed that under this policy, only physical elements and placement of an art project may be reviewed for safety and security purposes. “The content of student art projects, which is expression that enjoys the protection of the First Amendment, may not be reviewed as part of this process,” he wrote.

Tripathi also told students that he has met three times with leaders from the Student Association, Black Student Union and People of Color Council, as well as members of the Caribbean Student Union, African Student Association and Puerto Rican Organization for Dignity and Equal Rights (PODER) Latinos Unidos, and will meet again with the students on Friday. As a result of these meetings:

UB has convened a students of color advisory committee to the University Police Department that is meeting monthly “to sustain a dialogue between campus officers and students to help ensure a safe and welcoming campus environment for all students.”

Teresa Miller, vice provost for equity and inclusion, has held three meetings with students in residence halls across campus “to ensure our UB practices and programs are characterized by the fair, inclusive and equitable treatment of our diverse campus population.” Miller also is in the process of convening a student equity and inclusion advisory committee.

Members of the UB community are exploring new curricular approaches to issues of race, ethnicity and cultural difference to present as part of the UB Curriculum — the new general education program — as well as developing new programs and lectures for next semester and beyond.

The dean of the College of Arts & Sciences has been charged with assembling a committee to develop a formal policy regarding the installation of student art projects in university public spaces that strikes “the appropriate balance between academic freedom and inclusivity.”

“Together with the collaborative efforts of our student leadership, our faculty and university administration,” Tripathi wrote, “I believe that these conversations, procedures, curricular discussions and policies are allowing us to balance freedom of expression with the need to foster a welcoming and inclusive educational environment that is necessary for learning.”

### Comments