November 14, 2016

To the FIT Community:

This has been a tumultuous election season---one whose results surprised the entire nation---and perhaps many of us in the FIT community as well. After a long and polarizing campaign, a divided nation elected Donald Trump as its next president.

If the FIT community is like the rest of the nation---and I believe it is---then many of us are deeply disappointed, and many of us are thrilled. Given the tone of the campaign---and the difficult issues it raised---I know that feelings are running deep on all sides. But one thing is clear: our shared belief in this country and in the democratic process require us to respect the other point of view---and to look to the future. As President Obama himself said in welcoming Mr. Trump to the White House, "... if you succeed, then the country succeeds."

A hallmark of any educational institution is its ability to open its doors to a wide range of ideas and to welcome healthy debate. Ours is a highly diverse campus whose 12,000 students and employees represent every race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity and geographic point of origin. Surely there will be differences in attitudes, beliefs and convictions. Last week, some voted for Donald Trump; some for Hillary Clinton; some for Gary Johnson---and some for none of the above. Our community is stronger for that. And I believe that that strength comes from being exposed to this diversity of beliefs, and having the opportunity to listen with an open heart and to hear the messages espoused by our classmates, colleagues, mentors and friends. Whether we agree or disagree, each has something valuable to say.

Here at FIT, we seek to nurture a spirit of tolerance and maintain a civil environment in which we are free to learn, grow---and express ourselves---without fear of intimidation or judgment. It is truly the signature of an evolved community when all are free to be themselves without reprisal, bullying or derision. It might appear to some that the rhetoric of the past months released us from the restraining bonds of civility---and that we are free to discriminate and to deride with no concern for the cascading impact on individuals that such behavior leaves in its wake. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I firmly believe that in unity there is strength. I have faith that we will stand together and protect the rights of each of us to be here and to hold dear differing points of view. We have an obligation to protect these as inalienable rights for all who are privileged to be part of this community, and I believe we will all do just that.

Dr. Joyce F. Brown
President