In the courses I have taught on international relations, some of my lectures have focused on the primary function and fundamental responsibility that falls to each state throughout the history of the world. Unless a nation-state can secure its borders and ensure protection of its citizens, everything else is secondary and, in effect, rendered much less consequential. That is to say, if a citizen cannot rely on the state to protect his or her life, what good is infrastructure, or schools, or due process, or health care, or civil liberties, or anything else?

The same could be said for colleges and universities. Our primary role is to create a safe learning environment where faculty can teach, staff can serve, and students can achieve their educational, personal, and professional goals.

Earlier this week, we discovered some lettering on the back of a bathroom stall in the Combs Building. The words written were threatening and have put all of us in a heightened state of alert and concern. To my knowledge, this is the first time such an episode has occurred at Eastern Kentucky University.

We are treating this threat very seriously. Across campus, and in EKU family homes everywhere, including my own, important discussions are taking place right now about how best to respond to this threat. While we have no plans at this time to close campus or cancel classes, this does not mean our faculty, staff and students are limited in the steps they can take in adjusting class times or meeting spaces as they feel appropriate. I want to encourage all members of the campus community to join in what needs to be a campus-wide effort to face this challenge with unity and resolve.

As such, we are taking the following steps:

It will be left entirely to each individual faculty member whether or how he/she holds class on Wednesday. No student or faculty member will be punished or sanctioned if they choose to not adhere to their normal class schedule. I ask that faculty alert their students as to their course of action in a timely manner. I also ask students to communicate with their professors regarding their intentions in a timely manner.

This same flexibility will apply to staff. If people choose NOT to come to campus, that is their right. No vacation or sick leave will be assessed, but each employee must let his/her supervisor know of that decision.

Campus will remain open and there will be increased security throughout our buildings and grounds.

Let me be absolutely clear on this last point: threats of this nature WILL NOT be tolerated. Those who have done this, when they are caught and found responsible, will be held accountable and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. To make such a threat is a felony and we will make every attempt to find those at fault and ensure that this does not happen again.

I like to think of EKU as a family and our campus as our home. Family members look out for each other. We do not and will not allow anyone to cow or intimidate us or to create an environment where any of us does not feel welcomed or safe. But we will also leave to each of our family members the right to decide what they choose to do on Wednesday.

In the days ahead, I ask that all of us remain vigilant in ensuring the safety of our fellow Colonels. Take the extra time necessary to learn how to be prepared for any emergency situation on campus and off. Here are a few actions you can take today:

Work with your faculty, staff and student colleagues to adjust schedules in the coming days as you think
appropriate.

Share any information you might have about this case with EKU Police at (859) 622-1111 or via our new anonymous tip form now available on the police.eku.edu web site.

Register and receive RAVE Mobile Safety messages on your communications devices.

- Members of the EKU Campus Community:

If you have not done so already, please register your personal communication devices with the RAVE emergency communication system from your EKU Direct account. This will allow you to have the most current information on campus safety alerts.

Click: https://web4s.eku.edu/prod/twbkwbis.P_WWWLogin to register with RAVE via EKU Direct.

- For Others Interested in Receiving EKU Emergency Messages:

Go to the Eastern Kentucky University account on the RAVE web page (http://www.get rave.com/login/eku).
- Click the Register button in the upper right hand corner.
- Register your information and select to receive text, voice, and/or email messaging.

Thank you for your continued service to EKU.

Yours sincerely,

Michael T. Benson
President