To the Faculty, Staff and Students of Case Western Reserve:

The fatal shootings yesterday in a Pittsburgh synagogue have shaken us all, regardless of religion.

The lives lost and families shattered are devastating in themselves, but for many the killer’s motive makes the tragedy even harder to bear.

In 2015, a white supremacist murdered nine African-Americans in a nearly 200-year-old black church in Charleston. Then, in 2016, an American security guard ended the lives of 49 patrons at a gay nightclub in Orlando. While accounts differ regarding whether he acted from homophobia or loyalty to the Islamic state (or both), the massacre clearly targeted a specific group. And now, this weekend, a man who had reviled Jews on social media for months posted one last anti-Semitic rant before taking 11 lives and injuring six others.

History is replete with examples of people who perished because of one aspect of their humanity. No matter how complex their personality, they became defined by a single characteristic. They were attacked for this difference—seen not for who they are, but “what.”

It is sobering that, nearly two decades into the 21st century, such atrocities persist. They represent painful reminders that progress made cannot be assumed permanent—educating and raising awareness must be an ongoing effort. They also require that our actions reinforce that diversity and inclusion truly are core values at Case Western Reserve. Differences are not to be loathed, but celebrated.

Earlier this month, news broke that the federal administration is considering a preliminary proposal to limit the time international students can stay in the U.S., rather than continuing until the completion of their course of study. Then, a week ago, The New York Times broke news about federal attempts to roll back transgender and intersex rights.

In response to the latter, Vice President for Student Affairs Lou Stark emailed students to reinforce that our core values apply to all members of our community.

“Each of us brings unique experiences, perspectives and ideas to this campus,” he wrote, “and in so doing enhances the learning and growth opportunities for every member of this community.”

I could not agree more. And today our students are exemplifying this ideal, organizing a vigil for Pittsburgh’s victims to take place at 7 p.m. tomorrow (Monday, Oct. 29) under the awning between the Tinkham Veale University Center and Freiberger Field.

At the same time, I also want to remind all of our students that counseling is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 216.368.5872, and walk-in appointments are available from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday in Sears 220. Faculty and staff also can access counseling at any time by calling IMPACT Solutions at 1.800.227.6007; you can learn more about their programs at myimpactsolution.com.

We will continue to provide updates regarding campus activities and resources. For now, I want to thank you for all that you do to make Case Western Reserve a caring, compassionate and welcoming community.

Sincerely,

Barbara R. Snyder
President