June 5, 2023

Dear A&GS and OU Community,

On Wednesday, April 26th, Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) hosted an end-of-the-semester study night in the Bizzell Library. At the conclusion of the event, members of group leadership—Jenifer Esparza Gallegos, Alyssa Dinh, Melissa Marquez, Alyssa Rutz, and Ebene Smith—exited the library together, only to be met by an individual who began to yell racial slurs at them. This individual followed the five women as they walked to the North Oval, chanting slurs while pursuing them. When part of the group continued from the North Oval to the Sarkeys Energy Center, the individual continued to follow them. Very fortunately, all five students were and still are safe.

This type of egregious behavior will always be unacceptable and goes against the core diversity, equity, and inclusion missions of the College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences, the Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability, and the University of Oklahoma. It is incompatible with our collective desire to “recognize and respect the essential worth of each individual,” and to “commit to building a welcoming and supporting campus,” and the administration of the College and the Department stand in solidarity with the members of MANRRS who suffered this event. We are dismayed that such blatant acts of racism continue to happen on our campus. We always wish that our students, and all OU students, feel they are in a safe place, but too often that safety is diminished or destroyed by the cruel actions of others. The College and Department are vehemently against the actions purported by this individual: we do not condone the use of slurs of any kind, nor the intimidating and aggressive action of stalking people across campus. Racism and harassment have no home here.

Students who are victims of such harassment, and other types of harassment, are encouraged to make a report via OU Report It. Those who are victims of relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual harassment can also reach out to OU Advocates at 405-615-0013 by call or text. If needed, counseling services are provided by through the University Counseling Center.

As always, we encourage our students to reach out to us whenever we can be of support. We are ALWAYS here to listen, affirm and help.

Sincerely,
The College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences  
The Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability