

UMass Dartmouth Black Lives Matter flag on main campus grounds flagpoles

UMass Dartmouth has raised a Black Lives Matter flag on the main flagpoles on the campus grounds. From Interim Chancellor Randy Helm:

Dear members of the UMass Dartmouth Community,



Interim
Chancellor
Randy Helm

On November 18th I shared with the campus community a new “flag policy” that UMass Dartmouth adopted after extensive consultation and research, and vetting by the Cabinet. For those who wish to review the policy again, it can be found at: www.umassd.edu/media/umassdartmouth/universitypolicies/Flag_Policy_11-18-16.pdf

This policy provides a process by which requests to fly flags for specific causes and organizations can be reviewed and, if appropriate, approved. The first request received under this new policy was from the UMass Dartmouth Council on Diversity and Inclusion advocating for the Black Lives Matter flag. An advisory committee comprised of student, faculty, and staff representatives endorsed (though not unanimously) this request

and I have approved it. The Black Lives Matter flag was raised this morning and will, in accordance with our policy, be flown through Friday, December 16th.

Some members of our campus or the broader community may wonder why we feel it is appropriate to fly this flag at this time. I realize that there have been controversies about the Black Lives Matter movement. I thought it might be helpful for me to share my thoughts on what this flag means – and what it does not mean – in the context of our University's values.

In raising this flag we are taking the words on it literally. We are not endorsing the political agenda or platform of any off-campus group or organization. It is a statement that emphasizes the extent to which racial prejudice and violence have disproportionately affected African Americans. In the aftermath of the recent presidential election, our nation has seen a sharp increase in hate crimes and violence against people of color. It is understandable that these friends and colleagues feel especially vulnerable at this time, and it is especially important for us now, as a community, to signal our strong support for their lives and their dignity.

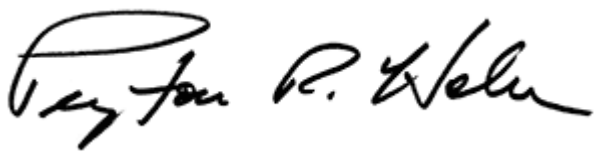
Let me be clear. The flag does not mean that other lives do not matter, or that they matter less than Black lives. Nor do we endorse views that are anti-Police or anti-Semitic. To the extent that any BLM organizations have embraced such positions, we do not agree with them. In particular, I want to commend the service of our own Public Safety Officers and their colleagues throughout the region who have a very difficult and often thankless job, and who do an outstanding job of keeping us safe, often in challenging situations.

It is my sincere hope that this action will encourage civil and respectful dialogue at a time of deep divisions in our country. This symbolic gesture will not change anything unless we listen to each other and engage in thoughtful conversations with our colleagues, our family, friends, and others. Our

Faculty Senate has approved a motion in support of a Teach-In Day related to race and violence, to take place early in the Spring semester. The event is being organized by the Diversity and Inclusion Council, in collaboration with faculty and staff. I look forward to engaging in this important conversation with other members of our community.

Finally, I wish all our colleagues and neighbors a restful and restorative holiday season, and a happy New Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Randy R. Helm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a stylized "H".

Randy Helm
Interim Chancellor