

DOP Updates, Vol 3 (3)
February 16, 2018

Teammates,

Welcome to 2018's first DOP Updates, a periodic email sent to members of our Department of Pathology team and others to focus on issues, events and topics of common interest. If there is something that you would like to share with your colleagues and co-workers please send me an email and I'll be sure to include it next time. As is always true, this email is also attached as a PDF file to ensure preservation of formatting across platforms.

"If you can't treat someone with dignity and respect, then get out." Lt. Gen Jay Silveria

Before uttering these words to close his impassioned [5:20 minute speech](#) to the cadets, airman, staff and faculty assembled at the US Air Force Academy just north of Colorado Springs, **Lt. Gen Jay Silveria** said,



"This is our institution, and if you need it, and you need my words, then you keep these words. And you use them and you remember them and you share them and you talk about them."

His speech was in response to a racist incident at their preparatory school. Ultimately it turned out that the victim was instead the perpetrator of the incident. True to his word, that

individual is no longer at the school.

In a follow-up article published on [CNN's website](#), Lt. Gen. Silveria said that the entire incident led to sober reflection during which he asked himself the question, *"Why is diversity so important?"* It is a question we've been pondering at our own university for the last few years, focusing on the substance rather than the political appeal of the sentiment. And as we ponder the importance of the question and our answers, few have spoken to the problem and the opportunities more eloquently than Lt. Gen Silveria.

*My commitment to diversity as an ideal of our service is born from a humble belief that **as people, not just airmen, we should treat each other with dignity and respect.** We must embrace the full spectrum of our humanity, perspectives and experiences.*

*We come to the Air Force from across the country and around the globe, each of us with varied backgrounds and experiences, which are vital to how we exchange ideas, challenge assumptions and broaden our horizons. **Diversity is one of the truest reflections of our nation's ideals, and part of the fabric of our military. It is crucial, not***

because it is in vogue, but because it makes us better, stronger and more effective *as a fighting force.*



Silveria suggests that the answer to racism and divisiveness (“horrible ideas”) is to have a better idea. And he describes as “tone deaf” anyone insensitive to the messages that played out in Charlottesville, Ferguson and the NFL. He suggests that our response should not be to demonize or to hate, but rather to surface a better idea that speaks to the best rather than the worst of who we are. And a better idea is to celebrate and embrace diversity as the thing that makes us better, stronger, and more effective. That message is at the core of our own online module,

[Diversity, Equity & Inclusion \(DEI\): The Basics – Part 1](#), worth a listen if you’ve not yet heard it.

We too often abandon our common commitment to respect and the norms of dignified behavior when confronted with someone who challenges our comfort zones. We feel somehow justified in demeaning or diminishing others when it resonates with our own world view and serves whatever our purpose in the moment. In the workplace, as is true anywhere, we are free to like or dislike whomever we choose (although choosing to dislike others can lead to some really long days). But whatever feelings we may harbor for another we are not free to treat her or him in a way that departs from our common commitment to the dignity and respect that defines us at our core . . . ever. If you struggle with this simple principle we aim to coach you. If you have a bad day, we aim to forgive and to coach you. But if you can’t – *and if you won’t* – treat everyone with respect and dignity then whatever else you may bring to the table you have found yourself on the wrong team and you should get out.

At a time when others in leadership roles and position of influence equivocate and carefully parse their words so as neither to offend nor support anyone, Lt. Gen Silveria’s simple and easily understood message galvanizes all of diversity, equity and inclusiveness around this simple principle governing how we treat one another. And he does that with the unwavering determination that no one who is incapable of treating EVERYONE with dignity and respect belongs in the United State Air Force. We are not a military force but instead an institution of higher learning. We are dedicated to serving patients and families in their times of greatest vulnerability, educating those who will care for us, and creating the future of health care through discovery. How is it that we could ever content ourselves with less than that to which Lt. Gen. Silveria has committed on behalf of the US Air Force? *It you can’t treat someone with dignity and respect, then get out.*

“The culture of any organization is shaped by the worst behavior the leader is willing to tolerate.”

(Gruenert & Whitaker. *School Culture Rewired. How to Define, Assess, and Transform it.*)

That’s the new to the moment. **THANK YOU** for the many ways in which you demonstrate your commitment to dignity and respect without regard to the differences that stand to divide us, and

choosing instead to focus on the humanity that unites us. That is at the root of the rewards realized from working together to transform the patient experience from a pathology platform while creating the future of our discipline. Send me a note if you have something that you would like to share next time. In the meantime, [let's be careful out there . . .](#)

Jeff