

June 27, 2008

To the students who say they have cancelled plans to apply to Case Western Reserve University:

I was disheartened to receive your letter indicating that you no longer wish to attend this institution because of perceptions regarding anti-Semitism on campus. I consider our university a place that encourages the free expression of ideas in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect. It is certainly true that not everyone will agree with the perspective of each speaker or organization. But it is my hope that, by stimulating discussion and debate, all members of the community will deepen their understanding of both their own beliefs, and those of others.

The 2007-2008 academic year did include controversy regarding a few of the speakers who came to our campus. For example, several individuals objected to the September 26 event featuring John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, authors of “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy.” Unfortunately, the talk took place on Sukkot, thus reducing the opportunity for those who might disagree with the authors to attend and air their perspectives. On June 12, Mearsheimer and Walt gave a lecture at Hebrew University.

It is worth noting that just two days after their talk at Case Western Reserve, the university hosted an international conference commemorating the 60th anniversary of the United Nations’ convention on genocide. As you may know, that convention arose in large measure through the efforts of Raphael Lemkin, a Jewish native of Poland who escaped to the United States during World War II but lost several dozen relatives in the Holocaust. The following month the university and Cleveland Hillel cosponsored an appearance by Sari Nusseibeh, a Palestinian professor of philosophy and president of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. And then, in December, the university hosted a forum related to the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage exhibit, “Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race.”

I cite these examples – and attach a more exhaustive list – to give you an idea of the breadth of opinions and topics presented on our campus each year. Similarly, our religious studies curriculum includes a wide range of courses, from a full minor in Judaic Studies (details available at <http://www.case.edu/artsci/jdst/courses.htm>) to classes regarding Islam, African-American Religions and yes, debates regarding land claimed by Israel and Palestine (details of courses offered this fall are at <http://www.case.edu/artsci/rlgn/courses.htm>).

Ultimately, neither my assurances nor the negative accounts you may have heard from others should determine your choices for college applications. The best way to begin to get a sense of a campus is to spend time on it. Because you live in greater Cleveland, you have many

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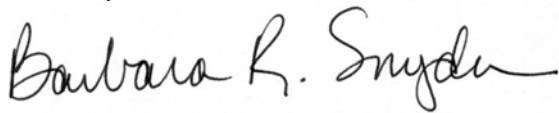
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opportunities to learn about our university firsthand. You can attend talks (events are listed on our homepage, www.case.edu), enroll in one of our precollege programs (<http://precollege.case.edu/>) or even take actual college courses (<http://www.cwru.edu/provost/ugstudies/precollege.htm>). And of course, I also encourage you to spend time with current students at the Cleveland Hillel (<http://www.clevelandhillel.org/>). I have discussed your letter with Gary Coleman, the organization's executive director, and I know that he would welcome the opportunity to speak directly with you about your concerns.

Of course, I cannot guarantee that every individual in our community is free from prejudice of any kind. No one could. But I do believe we aspire to be an inclusive community that values diversity. I hope you will review the list of campus speakers this year, look at the websites listed above, and visit our campus yourselves. Most of all, I hope you reconsider your decision.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to your letter; if I can provide any additional information, please contact me at barbara.snyder@case.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara R. Snyder". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Barbara R. Snyder
President

BRS/jcv