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2939 Birch Hollow Dr
Ann Arbor, MI 48108

(734) 677-0100
info@jewishannarbor.org

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Dear President Grasso:

On behalf of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, we express our gratitude for your strong condemnation of and apology for the actions of Professor Derek Peterson at Saturday's commencement ceremony. We appreciate your swift, unequivocal response and your call for unity rather than division on the UM campus.

What was so disappointing about Professor Peterson's remarks - the most recent in a series of disingenuous communications from him throughout the year purporting to speak for the faculty - was that instead of modeling civility and inclusivity, he broke ethical norms by lying to the administration and seeking to polarize students during a time of family celebration. Our rejection of his behavior is not due solely to the content or intellectual dishonesty of his remarks. We are most disturbed by his misuse of a university ceremony to deliver a calculated, divisive, one-sided political message to a captive audience of students and families there to celebrate their accomplishments and experience at UM.

Our universities must be models for free speech and protest which allow for all voices to express their opinions, and they must encourage honest, open, and civil dialogue across differences. We are grateful for your leadership in fostering this kind of culture at the University of Michigan.

The Jewish Federation Greater Ann Arbor is committed continuing to serve as a partner in this work. We encourage you to consider actions that make it clear to all students, faculty and staff that unethical behavior in the service of any cause, regardless of how just, will not be tolerated.

With support, wishes of strength, and gratitude,

Eileen Freed
CEO

Rabbi Asher Lopatin
Community Relations Director