**Faculty Statement on Charles Murray Lecture**

We, the undersigned faculty at Villanova University, stand in support of academic freedom and the open and informed exchange of ideas on our campus. If the civic mission of higher education is to be realized here at Villanova, then our students must be prepared to entertain arguments they may initially prefer to reject, to evaluate the merits of those arguments, and to marshal evidence in support of their own claims.  We support the university’s Events and Speakers Policy, which welcomes controversial speakers, including those who “hold, offer, and defend positions that differ from Catholic Church teaching” provided that “they will do so in an academically responsible fashion.” We uphold “the principle that mutual love and respect should animate every aspect of University life” (Faculty Handbook, 2016, p. 72).

Certainly a vigorous intellectual debate could be had about neoliberal ideology or about the tensions among liberty, security, equity, and efficiency in a democratic state, and we welcome such discourse on our campus. However, when one side of the debate is rooted in spurious assertions about the genetic inferiority of particular groups--assertions that foreclose the possibility of half of our faculty and students engaging as equals in this debate--we believe it is incumbent upon us to speak out. We do not know to what extent Charles Murray will draw on his widely-debunked earlier work asserting the innate intellectual deficiencies of women and persons of color when he comes to our campus this week to speak about governmental over-regulation. Whether he does or not, his reputation has been built on such claims--claims that we denounce. Not only do they violate the principle of mutual respect for the inherent dignity and intellectual capacity of all members of our community, but equally problematically, these assertions are based on irresponsible research methods that have been thoroughly discredited by the wider scholarly community. While it may appear there is no connection between Murray’s earlier work and the topic of his talk, it cannot be ignored that the “dismantling of the administrative state,” which the so-called alt-right is championing, has as its chief target the many social safety net programs, which improve the opportunities and lives of the poorest and least privileged among us, many of whom are the very people Murray once characterized as genetically inferior. We encourage our students to inquire into these matters and seek knowledge by engaging with faculty who are well-versed in the standards of social scientific research, the use of statistical methods, and the proper way to interpret the findings  of genetic research and social genomics; by reading scholarly work that responds to Murray’s writings, including  [work](https://www.amazon.com/Assault-Equality-Peter-Knapp/dp/0275956199/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1490369935&sr=8-3&keywords=Peter+Knapp)  by Villanova faculty; and by taking courses from professors in communication, sociology, criminology, political science, and biology, who critically engage his work.

While the university’s Events and Speakers Policy states that an invitation to a speaker should not be construed as an endorsement of the speaker’s views, inviting Murray to be the sole speaker on a platform of his own, rather than as a participant in a constructive debate, may appear to many as substantive support for his ideas and the career he has built upon them.

Villanova aspires to a higher caliber of rigor and research ethics than what is evidenced in Murray’s prior work. Our students and our whole academic community deserve better.

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