

Our Progress Toward Achieving a More Diverse and Inclusive Campus

Mar. 7, 2016

Campus Community,

Last Monday night, our students provided exceptional leadership in convening a Town Hall to discuss issues of diversity and inclusivity on our campus. This forum was a very important next step in our on-going campus-wide conversation on matters of diversity and inclusivity.

I encourage you to review the videos and presentations from that evening: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PskP5-qbRcc>

I am proud of our students for their courage and leadership. And I assure you that I share the concern about the events taking place on our campus and across the country. It is clear these issues have captured attention across our campus. As a result, dialogue and actions are underway all across our institution; but there is much work left to do.

I have been fortunate in the last several months to engage in constructive dialogue with a wide range of students, staff, and faculty from our underrepresented populations as we work together to achieve the goal we share: a campus where everyone — regardless of race, gender, background, religion, ethnicity, identity, and other human characteristics — feels a sense of safety and belonging. I am anxious for that dialogue to continue in the consistent spirit of transparency, honesty, and respect.

We are making progress:

- We are implementing our new University Strategic Plan, which includes specific goals and metrics related to the diversity and inclusivity of our campus, including aggressive increases of underrepresented student enrollment and success and faculty and administrative and professional staff employment
- We are developing and implementing a new University Diversity Plan
- We are expanding the mission of the Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) Center and creating a Bias Incident Response Team
- We have increased investment in diversity scholarships at the undergraduate and graduate level (even in the context of repeated budget reductions for the entire university)
- We are establishing new positions in the Graduate School, our Health colleges, and the Counseling Center that will be specifically attentive to diverse needs
- We are creating more mentoring programs
- We are expanding resources for student programming

- We are circulating a new draft of the Code of Student Conduct and have requested feedback from students through the Student Government Association (we intend to take the new Code to the Board of Trustees in May)
- We are reviewing the effectiveness of and will further strengthen our Office for Institutional Diversity and its component offices and services
- We have established a committee to review and make recommendations regarding the mural in Memorial Hall
- We are creating a multidisciplinary research Center for Equality and Social Justice
- We are expanding resources and efforts at faculty recruitment and retention through our Office for Institutional Diversity and Office for Faculty Advancement
- We have undertaken a campus-wide Unconscious Bias Initiative (which the Board of Trustees, along with senior administrative and academic officials, participated in last week) that will offer training to every member of the University community
- We are reviewing the diversity components of our Core Curriculum and UK 101

We have much work left to do in the never-ending aspiration for a safe and supportive community for all. We will continue to listen to and work with students, faculty, and staff who represent the broad mosaic of our campus, including our Black, LGBTQ*, Muslim, First-Generation, Latino, and International undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff; and others who speak from diverse perspectives. It is essential that we bring together the voices, views, and perspectives of everyone who calls our campus “home” to ensure we are undertaking a set of initiatives that is comprehensive and consensus-driven. We must continue to build a global approach to these issues as we chart a thoughtful and sustainable path forward.

I look forward to continuing to work with you in a spirit of openness, mutual trust, and recognition of the value in all of us.

Eli Capilouto
President