MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty, Staff, and Students

FROM: Alice Gast, President and Pat Farrell, Provost

DATE: November 26, 2013

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON WORK TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Work to improve the diversity and inclusiveness of the Lehigh University campus has been underway in many areas across the campus for quite a while. These efforts have included, naming a few, work by students, support of students by faculty and staff, faculty and staff collaborations, and administrative actions. Among the efforts have been those to continue to bring a more diverse student body to campus and to continue to recruit and retain a more diverse faculty.

Events this Fall, some initiated by the FBR (From Beneath the Rug) group, have reminded us of our need to focus more on student experiences and the importance of campus climate and culture in more effectively achieving our educational mission. As a result of reminding some, and making others aware for perhaps the first time of the issues of inclusion and marginalization across all dimensions of diversity, students in particular have renewed their conversations, actions, and commitment to addressing the climate issues exposed. Even as many on campus become more engaged in this issue, racist or sexist words and actions still happen. While we are frustrated that these things continue to occur, they reinforce the need to engage the entire campus in this work. Events such as the gathering at the flagpole in the wake of the egging and racist spray painting at Umoja House show the underlying unity of our students who are looking for a better Lehigh.

This note is to provide a partial update of activities around inclusion. We also recognize that there are quite a few significant efforts being made at many points across the campus. As you will note below, one of the activities/objectives in the near term is to try to name that range of activities both so the community knows about them, and so that interested people may find a way to join in.

Here are some things that are happening or are in the active planning stages:

1. President Gast, Provost Farrell, and a number of students from the FBR group, student athletes, Gryphons, and students in the Greek system have been meeting regularly for about two months to develop a list of action items that we could take now, towards a more inclusive and better Lehigh. Some of the actions in this list are a result of those discussions.

2. We will create a permanent student group that pays attention to campus climate for students and works on projects that can affect that climate. There will be regular communication
between this group and the senior administration. We hope to have this in place in the Spring 2014 semester.

3. We are working to create a curriculum in the summer before 1st year for incoming first-year students prior to their matriculation to Lehigh. This summer opportunity will be geared toward first-generation college students and other identified student populations in order to support their successful transition to Lehigh. Tyrone Russell, Director of Multicultural Affairs and a group of faculty and students are working on this.

4. The senior leadership has stepped forward to undertake training in cultural competency. This training for leadership groups of faculty and staff is a recommendation from the VISIONS consultants. They are consultants with experience in helping universities plan for how to organize their work on diversity and inclusion.

5. We are reenergizing the CEC (Council for Equity and Community) and actively inviting suggestions for additional membership. CEC is co-chaired by Siva Sivakumar (Marketing) and Lori McClain (Student Affairs). The group has formed three sub-committees to take action in these areas:

6. • Support of Visible Commitments to Inclusion
   • Developing and articulating the Guiding Goals for Inclusion and Engagement
   • Community dialogue, education, awareness

7. The NSF ADVANCE grant team (Kristen Jellison and Marci Levine Morefield) and Henry Odi, Vice Provost for Academic Diversity, have continued to offer search committee training (now at least 4 times a year), and a number of workshops on unconscious bias in support of building diverse pools of candidates for faculty searches and evaluating those pools in a conscientious and equitable way. We pledge to enhance attendance at these workshops and educational sessions.

8. Programming at Umoja House: Angela Scott, Director of Academic Outreach and Henry Odi, are working with Tyrone Russell, Student Affairs staff, Residence Life staff, and faculty and students to develop a next generation of programming and possible facility improvements to Umoja House.

9. Efforts are underway led by Henry Odi to work with department chairs and faculty to develop an inclusion action plan for each academic department.

10. We are expanding our efforts to integrate the Principles of our Equitable Community throughout campus as expectations for everyone in the Lehigh Community. Clearly and boldly stating our values while recruiting new students, faculty and staff is a critical step in setting expectations for behavior.

   • J. Leon Washington, Dean of Admissions, and the admissions staff have integrated the Principles of our Equitable Community into their presentations to potential student and their families and now include them in the accepted student packet.
• The Principles of Our Equitable Community has been and continues to be part of the Staff Orientation program coordinated by Human Resources, with contributions by Henry Odi. We are working to include a similar session on advancing diversity and inclusion for the new faculty orientation starting next summer.
• Efforts are now underway to frame and place the Principles document in high traffic areas in each of our academic and non-academic buildings.

11. Diversity and inclusion will be the major topic for the February 2014 Board of Trustees meeting. A planning committee of senior officers is working with a group of Trustees to make this an effective effort.

12. The faculty meeting on December 2 will discuss a syllabus statement proposed by the CEC regarding the Principles to be included on all class syllabi to reinforce our commitment to uphold and live by these principles.

13. We need to develop a better way to communicate to the campus the efforts around inclusion going on across campus. This communication should be more comprehensive, and probably much more frequent than it currently is.

14. How can we be sure to develop cultural awareness as a core competency of all Lehigh students? Developing cultural awareness is already a part of New Student Orientation. Could we do more through existing first-year experiences—EvoLution Seminar, bLUeprint which is the new student life curriculum, and perhaps others? The 'ultimate' manifestation of this effort might be a required course (for credit) in cultural awareness.

15. The student group has suggested creating a wider campus education/seminar/workshop series to invite broad discussion and elevate understanding of challenging issues in inclusion and diversity. This may be a part of the evolving MLK Committee’s work to make that a year-round topic as well as a collaborative effort with the CEC.

16. Given the fact that we continue to be challenged by language and how disrespectful some language can be, we will work to create a forum on language and its impact.

17. In our visits to departments, we have heard from a number of faculty that they have expertise in the issues around diversity and inclusion and are eager to volunteer that expertise. We plan to work with faculty to identify some key opportunities, particularly working with faculty colleagues, to tap that expertise in service of the campus.

18. Many have suggested we initiate a new climate survey to help identify areas to focus and develop measures for success. The last climate survey was conducted in 2007. The COACHE survey should give useful faculty climate information, but we may need to do a campus-wide survey as well.

Thank you for all you do for Lehigh.