


MEMORANDUM

April 8, 2014

TO: Karen Hanson, Senior Vice President and Provost
Katrice Albert, Vice President for Equity and Diversity
Kathryn Brown, Vice President for Human Resources
Pam Wheelock, Vice President for University Services
Danita Brown Young, Vice Provost for Student Affairs
Amy Phenix, Chief of Staff

FROM: President Eric W. Kaler 

RE: Campus Climate Working Group

In my recent State of the University speech I discussed both our challenge and opportunity as an elite university to meet the Grand Challenges facing us on our campus and around the world. I also named as the primary goal of the University's Strategic Plan becoming preeminent in solving the Grand Challenges of a diverse and changing world. And I specifically noted the importance of both advancing equity and diversity and enhancing student, faculty, and employee engagement in meeting these challenges.

I know that as senior leaders you appreciate that we face complex internal and external challenges. We must also understand that the changes made in order to find solutions to these challenges will impact the culture of the organization and the climate experienced by students, faculty, and staff. Changing the culture of the institution and being proactive in addressing climate issues requires time, intentionality, and nimbleness. It also demands transparency, effective communication, and accountability for our actions.

While we have many efforts in place to promote diversity and a welcoming climate, from what I have seen and heard, they are not well coordinated and they are not having the type of high impact results we need.

To maximize the impact of our efforts and advance our ambition for both excellence and inclusion, I would like you to work with me to ensure all of our students, faculty, and staff find this a welcoming campus. Specifically, I am formally asking you to be a member of a new campus climate work group.

My objectives for this group are to:

- Assess the current campus climate and develop targeted and prioritized strategies for improving it.
- Educate the campus community on how individuals can contribute to a welcoming climate.
- Create broad awareness of the University's commitment to creating a welcoming climate and the strategies we are using to achieve this goal.

Long term, I believe this work will support our efforts to enhance equity, diversity and engagement across the entire University community.

I encourage the work group to consult broadly about current needs and efforts underway, including gathering qualitative and quantitative data from our community, and studying best practices from institutions around the country. This work needs to be timely, with a plan completed by this summer and implementation beginning in the fall. To the extent possible the plan should leverage existing resources and investments. However, I will support modest funding for new initiatives the group deems critical to success. As well, my office will provide staff support for this work, as needed.

I've asked Chief of Staff Amy Phenix to chair this work group; however, it is critical that each of your offices bring your personal leadership, expertise, and resources to the effort.

Thank you all for your commitment to equity, diversity, engagement and our efforts to meet the Grand Challenges. I look forward to your recommendations.

EWK/jk

Enclosure

cc: Deb Cran, chief of staff, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Patricia Franklin, chief of staff, Vice President for Human Resources
Greg Hestness, chief of police, Department of Public Safety
Leslie Krueger, chief of staff, Vice President for University Services
Kristin Lockhart, chief of staff, Vice President for Equity and Diversity
Amelious Whyte, chief of staff, Office of Student Affairs