

Subject: Framework for a More Inclusive Lawrence

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From: Mark Burstein

To: STUDENT-L, FACULTY-L, STAFF-L

Dear Lawrence Community,

Welcome back from winter break. I hope you all had a relaxing few weeks, and an opportunity to spend time with family and friends. We ended fall term together with a greater awareness, led by our students, that we must become a more inclusive community and thereby strengthen Lawrence and the education we offer. The tone of the campus conversation as well as the hurtful graffiti in the university's annual report reminded us of how much work we still have to do to reach this goal, and to create a community where all of its members feel safe.

I want to start with an apology. A defining goal for Lawrence and certainly for me is to create a learning environment in which all students, as well as faculty and staff, can thrive. This fall's events indicate that we have not moved quickly enough towards this goal; for that I am deeply sorry. We have been too reliant on Lawrentians of color to educate our community on the central issues of race and identity. This additional burden, plus a lack of resources, has prevented many from establishing an intellectual home in Appleton.

As a community, we often lack the skills to discuss difference in a consistently civil manner, without personal affront or insult. At its core, I believe, Lawrence should create the impetus toward an equitable society in which all of us acquire the tools to succeed in diverse workplaces, to be engaged citizens in pluralistic communities. As an educational institution, we are committed to learning, discussion, listening, and collaboration, to help all of us understand our world and ourselves. In courses, we strive to present important information, engage in careful analysis, and initiate thoughtful discussions. Our goal is to help everyone develop, grow and achieve full human potential. We can, we must do better to reach this goal.

During the break, faculty, staff and students worked together in various shared governance committees to consider how to **accelerate and enhance our effort to become a more inclusive community**. Many of the student demands presented this fall paralleled projects that these and other committees have been working on for some time. The goal of these meetings during break was to launch essential next steps that will provide a framework for larger conversations and subsequent action, which will involve students as well as faculty and staff who were not present on

campus in December. This framework includes five principal areas: learning, resources, safety, enhanced diversity, and dialogue across difference. Below is a summary of the initial work we have undertaken.

LEARNING

The cornerstone of our effort to strengthen a Lawrence education and to become a more inclusive institution is the **creation of more opportunities to learn about and to understand race and identity** within our campus community, within American society, and around the world. Last spring and summer, faculty members of the Ethnic Studies program completed a self-study and external review, which suggested a blueprint for a way to enhance our curricular offerings in this area. This work, funded by a presidential Mellon Grant, proposed that we add a tenure line position in Ethnic Studies with an emphasis on the contemporary African American experience, and that we create resources to free existing colleagues to teach additional courses in Native culture and American Latino/Latina literature. The Curriculum Committee has approved the proposed new tenure line position; Provost Burrows and I will find the resources to proceed with this search. The Provost is also in conversations that will create the additional courses. Once completed, these additions to our curriculum could lead to the approval of an Ethnic Studies major and a possible reconceptualization of the University's diversity requirement.

Students have asked for Spanish courses tailored to the learning needs of heritage speakers and for the qualification of additional languages to comply with the University's language requirement. The Spanish Department and the Foreign Language Coalition will consider these suggestions this winter. The Provost has also begun to work with the incoming and outgoing directors of Freshman Studies to ensure that we continue to teach a diverse set of works in this important introduction to the Lawrence intellectual experience. We are also undertaking efforts to ensure that we have effective and sensitive discussions of race and identity in course seminars.

Students, faculty, and staff have requested **ongoing diversity and inclusion training**. Over the past two years, the President's Committee on Diversity Affairs (PCDA), as well as colleagues who lead our Title III effort, launched pilot programs along these lines for faculty advisors and Freshman Studies instructors. The PCDA plans to offer more comprehensive cultural competency workshops this winter for all employees. These offerings will become frequent opportunities for all of our professional development. The Office of Multicultural Affairs, in consultation with the PCDA, will also offer educational and programmatic opportunities for students to develop

cultural competency skills beginning in Welcome Week and continuing throughout their years at Lawrence.

A liberal education also requires that we have **unfettered access to information**. The student demands included a statement that the University blocked an external website. An investigation indicated that the only sites blocked are those that pose a digital threat to our network, including individual user accounts. Such sites are blocked automatically, not through direct human intervention. Nonetheless, our investigation continues to ensure that we provide open access to information.

RESOURCES

Student demands included a request for **increased Diversity Center resources** and relocation of the center itself. These coincide with recommendations made in the University's 2010 Strategic Plan. During the break, I authorized the hiring of a permanent new staff person to work with Assistant Dean Moua. Assistant Dean Moua, Dean Lauderdale, and Associate Dean Wicker have begun to research new locations for the Center with colleagues from Facility Services. They will include students in this effort this winter with a goal of identifying a new location by the end of the academic year.

After extensive conversations with the PCDA and others, I have authorized the **hiring of an Associate Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion**. In early November, the President's Cabinet decided to create this role in response to recommendation of the PCDA; shortly thereafter, student demands further supported the urgency to create such a position. This new position will fulfill a May 2013 request by the Faculty Governance Committee. The new administrator will serve both in the Provost's office and in the President's Cabinet. This person will: lead efforts to ensure that we attract a talented and diverse faculty and staff; provide an additional student resource; chair the PCDA; and lead our cultural competency professional development efforts. We will begin a national search for this position immediately.

Student demands also echoed the request by last spring's Faculty Working Group for Study Abroad that we increase need-based financial aid support for study abroad. The Board of Trustees has discussed this request, which has full support from the administration. We plan to announce changes later this month that will increase funding for next academic year.

SAFETY

We cannot reach our educational goals as an institution unless all members of our community feel safe. In our **continued commitment to safety**, we are adding a bias-incident reporting capability to the safety app that was launched this fall. This capability will provide a bias reporting process for any member of the Lawrence community, whether the event takes place in the Fox Cities or on campus. This app already allows users to immediately connect to Campus Safety or local emergency services if the situation is urgent. Until the new Associate Dean of the Faculty is hired, bias reports will be directed to Provost Burrows, who will review all submissions and address or refer the issues as appropriate. We have coordinated our efforts with the City of Appleton to ensure that reports are investigated to the extent possible by law. I urge every member of our community to use this reporting process if they encounter a bias incident of any kind. Change can only happen when troubling events are made visible.

The Provost's office has also started an effort to **streamline the University's Grievance Procedures** into an integrated and clearer policy. Associate Dean of the Faculty Williams will present a draft of this new policy to LUCC, the Faculty, and the Human Resources Department for consideration before the end of Winter Term.

It is clear that the ability to post threats to social media has at times created an unsafe campus environment. **The University will continue to report for investigation any threatening statements to law enforcement authorities**, including those posted on social media, even to supposedly anonymous sites such as Yik Yak. The Faculty Governance Committee will convene a committee of faculty, students, and staff to consider other social media guidelines for our community.

ENHANCED DIVERSITY

The student demands included the **hiring of a more diverse faculty and staff at Lawrence**. For us to be a truly inclusive community, we need to attract the most talented and accomplished faculty and staff possible. Two grants from the Mellon Foundation we received in the past two years, one directly to the University and one through the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, provide funds to increase the diversity of Lawrence faculty. These resources, plus leadership from the PCDA and the President's Cabinet, have begun to show progress over the past year. Open positions attracted a more diverse set of candidates, and have led to an increase in the hiring of people of color. In 2013 and 2014, 8% of our new hires were employees of color. In 2015, 28% of new hires were employees of color. We have also made progress with gender diversity. Every candidate hired was the first choice in her or his respective search. Our new Associate Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Diversity and

Inclusion will work closely with the PCDA and the Cabinet to accelerate this success at all levels of the university and create programs to ensure that these new members of our community will thrive here.

We also need to continue our efforts to assemble a Board of Trustees and an Alumni Association Board that represent our entire community. Thanks to leadership from many, we have made progress in reaching this goal. But we need to stay focused on this effort.

The **recruitment and retention of a diverse student population** remains a high priority for the university as we prepare students to succeed in an increasingly diverse world. The past ten years have seen the most significant sustained growth in recruitment of students of color in our history. Still, there is more work to do. Dean Anselment is working with the Faculty Governance Committee to provide a clear statement of our ideal class composition. Dean Anselment will also work with a subcommittee of the PCDA to ensure that our recruitment and retention practices put us in the best position to be successful.

Students have asked that we rely on student evaluations to determine tenure decisions. Instead, the Committee on Tenure gathers views from all past and present students of a tenure candidate through the Survey of Student Opinion. These data form the core information of a tenure case. However, Provost Burrows and I do agree that the University can **organize end of the term course evaluations in a way that would increase student participation**. We will ask the Instruction Committee to consider options and make a recommendation to the full faculty.

DIALOGUE ACROSS DIFFERENCE

Over the past two years students, faculty and staff have approached Vice President Truesdell, Dean Lauderdale and me with **concerns about our community's inability to discuss constructively, different and passionately held opinions**. As I have discussed in past Matriculation Convocations we, like much of the rest of society, may be losing the skills that such conversations require. Too frequently we avoid conflicting viewpoints or direct confrontation, and we silence the views of others. Often we move these conversations to social media, a far less productive forum.

Our ability to constructively engage each other is of critical importance if we are to prepare students to succeed. We must, therefore, **ensure that freedom of inquiry and expression can thrive here at Lawrence**. A group of students has been meeting with Dean Lauderdale about the need to create an ongoing structure that could foster

this type of dialogue. From these conversations it has become clear that outside expertise could help us develop the skills we need, and create an environment where conflict, an inherent part of any successful community, can be explored and successfully managed. One possible partner is The Sustained Dialogue Institute, an organization that has partnered with over forty college campuses including Denison and Beloit. More information about this organization can be found at sustaineddialogue.org. We will begin our collaboration in Spring Term, if not sooner.

Finally, **we have scheduled a community conversation for January 7th from 4 to 7 pm in the Warch Center**: students, faculty, and staff will have the opportunity to ask questions about each of these initiatives, to provide feedback, to test the bias incident reporting app, and to have the opportunity to offer additional suggestions. More information about this conversation will be provided early next week. We will also establish a web page on Diversity and Inclusion in the next two weeks, which will provide information on these and other initiatives. This website, plus updates from me and other cabinet officers, will provide periodic progress reports to the campus community. I want to thank the many members of our community who gave their time during the break for dozens of meetings to consider these initiatives and to provide essential components of this framework.

Over this past year, many members of our community have advocated substantive changes in an effort to improve the university. Their leadership has not always been easy, but it has led us to a moment in which we can engage with this momentum and enhance Lawrence, the education we offer, and the campus community in which we study, work, and live. This set of initiatives is meant to serve as a framework for efforts that will require participation from all of us.

To build the learning environment and community we desire, we have to engage in hard work and difficult conversations and to integrate conflicting views of the present and future. This process will help us to develop the skills we need to be successful Lawrentians in this pluralistic and rapidly changing world. Without this process, we cannot move forward. This will mean change. I know we will rise to this challenge as a community, and I look forward to working with each of you on this goal.

Yours,

Mark

Mark Burstein
President, Lawrence University