

From: Kimberly A. Barrett <kimberly.a.barrett@lawrence.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2019 7:33 AM
Subject: Just Breathe!

Dear Lawrence Students, Faculty and Staff,

You made it! You are at Lawrence University, a new or returning member of our campus community, settling into the 2019-20 academic year. I am writing to add my welcome to the many you have already received and to urge you to take some time to just breathe and appreciate being who you are in this moment.

My role on campus is to help Lawrence become more inclusive. For me, this work is grounded in the idea of inclusive excellence, a term first coined by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). I have adopted a definition based on their work that describes inclusion as active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive complexity, leadership, cultural competence, and humility leading to an empathetic understanding of the ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

As you can see by the aforementioned definition, efforts to create a campus culture that is both diverse and inclusive touch every aspect of what we do and as such can seem quite overwhelming at times. However, the most profound act of inclusion is just being, taking the brave step of feeling free to be who we are and inviting others to do the same. This is true for individuals who identify as people of color or white, cisgender or gender non-conforming, conservative or liberal, and for the many other diverse communities with whom people at Lawrence identify. Each of us deserves to simply be, boldly, unabashedly, and authentically who we are.

Undoubtedly, we are a community of doers and achievers and inclusion requires action. But it begins with learning the critical and challenging skill of simply being. Some refer to this as the practice of mindfulness or gratitude. I think of it as allowing ourselves space to breathe. So make sure you schedule this important task on your calendar. Once you have scheduled that in, I hope you will join us for some of the additional opportunities available to increase your cultural competence and empathetic understanding of our campus and the world.

For your convenience I have included a link to some of the major events that will be supported by this office in the coming year (<https://www.lawrence.edu/info/offices/diversity-and-inclusion/get-involved>). I invite you to attend our first Culture Competency lecture of the academic year, "Accessibility as Inclusiveness" (today—Tuesday, September 24 at 11:15 in the Warch Campus Center Mead Witter Room). In addition to these events, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion is offering a new workshop on request to committees and groups on understanding and reducing modern prejudice. I also hope you will join us in the 7th week of the term as we continue the process of Truth and Reconciliation at Lawrence with a campus-wide dialogue about what reconciliation means to us as individuals and as a Lawrence community. Look for information about this event from the Center for Spiritual and Religious Life later in the term. But first, just breathe.

Best wishes for a fulfilling and successful academic year!

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