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Subject: ASAP 25: On Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Date: Monday, October 3, 2022 5:25:32 PM

Dear Colleagues,

This last note in the series concerns the fifth goal in the [Academic and Student Affairs Plan 2025](#) (ASAP 25) to become a more just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive campus. Racially, most of our children are now non-White and, in a little over 20 years, Whites will no longer make up the majority of the U.S. population.^[i] As emphasized in ASAP 25, those historically underserved by higher education continue to make up a larger part of Southeastern Wisconsin as well so we must

“...serve more students of color and help them graduate at significantly higher rates. As we continue to do this, we will ensure that the transformative effects of a higher education touch more and more lives in our region and beyond.” (p. 5)

How can we do otherwise? A “more perfect union”, in the words of our constitution, will achieve greater justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Our role is to help students develop the knowledge and skills to engage in this preeminent civic project; to lead happy, meaningful lives and to contribute to making a better world.

What great work!

With historic records for the number of graduates, at or near historic record graduation rates for students of color, reclassification as a “Medium Master’s College or University”, and having one of 10 fastest-growing master’s populations in the nation among small colleges/universities, UW-Parkside is being recognized in November by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities as the winner of its 2022 [Excellence and Innovation Award for Student Success and College Completion](#), the only institution in the United States receiving this recognition. UW-Parkside was also just [ranked by US News](#) fourth among public higher education institutions across 12 states in the Midwest (top among UW comprehensives) for increasing social mobility and fifth for diversity (and once again first among the UW comprehensives).

So, I want to acknowledge our progress and the contributions each of you have made to helping UW-Parkside become a more student-centered university! Woohoo and thank you!!!

The ASAP 25, emphasizes two broad areas in this space. One is to elevate the teaching and learning director position, recruit an individual to lead next-level efforts, and build out a team to support this work. We took a big step forward when Dr. Amber Handy joined us. Amber is an exemplary leader, just as good a teammate, and is contributing to JEDI initiatives across campus. The other critical area is to recruit and retain more diverse colleagues. Data for 2021, indicates that 20.4 percent of our faculty and staff identify as colleagues of color. While we’re a bit more diverse in recent years, looking back further indicates the overall proportions have not changed much. Now many of you have likely heard the maxim “hope is not a strategy”, but I will tell you mine anyway. It is my hope that our efforts to become a more student-centered university will, over time, help us attract and retain more colleagues of color who are similarly committed to this work. As Michele Gee says, “that’s all I’ve got for you now,” but we must be open to new ideas.

Foundational to continued progress is having shared understandings of what we’re trying to accomplish. Trina, Amber, and DeAnn held listening sessions among students, faculty, and staff and then, in consultation with the EDI Council, the SEDI Council, and Chancellor’s Cabinet, developed

common definitions for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion that include aspirational goals. Then, they examined where JEDI goals intersect with the four other priorities in the ASAP 25 and used those to shape a JEDI strategic plan for the next several years. This was informed by the input from working groups that included students, faculty, and staff from across the university to help identify the barriers for success and goals for our work. They are currently developing measurable outcomes and timelines. As Dr. Handy explained at Convocation:

“Many of the initiatives will overlap with work that is already underway, while others will spark new opportunities for change. We will invite you, as members of the Parkside community, to weigh in and help us determine future tactic priorities through a website later this year... (t)ransparency is vital to the success of this program, and we intend to be honest about both our successes and those programs that didn’t work out as we’d hoped.”

Amber also touched on leaders across campus who are engaged in new collaborations to better serve our students and colleagues:

- Jessica Cole is leading a group working to ensure chosen names and pronouns are accurately captured in our campus software so students and employees are consistently addressed in alignment with their gender identity;
- Kaila Bingen and Amanda Markwardt are promoting existing resources for DACA, Dreamer, and undocumented students;
- Trina and Amber are offering a program called “So, Let’s Talk” offering facilitated trainings tailored to your department’s needs on JEDI issues;
- a new [Multifaith Religious and Spiritual Observance calendar](#) has launched on the university’s website with religious and spiritual observances for multiple traditions, dates for federal holidays, brief explanations of each holiday, and accommodations that may be required to help you plan your syllabi, events, and serve as a resource when a student or employee approaches you to request accommodation for their religious or spiritual needs;
- Natalia Taft and Amber are leading a National Science Foundation-sponsored Inclusive STEM Teaching Learning Community that will provide an 8-week opportunity to engage with a national course and local learning community focused on creating an inclusive learning environment in STEM classrooms; and
- other workshops, learning communities, and brown bag sessions will be offered to learn more about the diversity of our UW-Parkside community and how we can all help to create a welcoming environment where all of us feel we truly belong (--you can see many more opportunities on the [Office of Equity and Inclusion](#) web site).

As we become more inclusive, let’s also remember that we shouldn’t exclude the voices of those who have been privileged. All of us are privileged in some ways and all of us have had to struggle more in others. Elevating what we have in common is as important to our search for truth as understanding and honoring our differences. Doing so in a civil way, in our classes and conference rooms, may be the best expression of what we do as higher educators. It is especially needed these days.

It continues to be my privilege to serve and to learn as your provost and, as always, I value any comments or suggestions you wish to share.

Rob

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[\[1\] https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf)