



The University of Vermont

Office of the President

September 29, 2017

To: UVM Community

From: Tom Sullivan, President
David Rosowsky, Provost and Senior Vice President
Wanda Heading-Grant, Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity & Multicultural Affairs
Annie Stevens, Vice Provost for Student Affairs

Re: Response to Student Concerns Regarding Diversity and Inclusion at UVM

On Wednesday, September 27, 2017, we met with a small group of students representing organizations expressing specific concerns and demands with respect to improving racial equality and diversity and inclusion resources and initiatives, at UVM.

This communication provides some background and information about the University's efforts and its response to the expressed concerns. We offer our firm commitment to implementing the action steps detailed below.

Background

The University of Vermont's efforts to become a more diverse, inclusive and multi-culturally competent campus span three decades. This has been a challenging journey, especially for members of our community who are directly impacted by acts of racism, discrimination and intolerance that exists in our society, and inevitably, at times on our own campus.

Students have played an important role in keeping the University focused on the necessity to continue to make progress on these issues. Their activism and their passion for the pursuit of racial and social justice are key elements of their participation.

With their involvement and contributions, UVM has made significant progress. The University is substantially more diverse than it was 30 years ago. The University's curriculum has been enriched and strengthened with diversity requirements, which we have committed to improve in the coming months. Racial and social justice are foundational values of UVM. The University maintains a robust infrastructure and policies to combat acts of racism, discrimination, intolerance and micro-aggressions.

The journey toward a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment for every student, faculty, staff and administrator continues. The President's Commission for Inclusive Excellence has been working on and soon will be completing a Framework for Inclusive Excellence with academic

and administrative leaders developing concrete action plans. At a gathering of University leaders in June, President Tom Sullivan and Provost David Rosowsky spoke about creating a sense of urgency on these issues. “Now, we need a bolder, more coherent, cohesive approach to achieve better results,” President Sullivan told the leaders.

During their education, it always has been critically important to maintain an ongoing dialogue with our students. That has certainly been the case over the past several months. The University fully intends to continue engaging with students, faculty and staff, and is committed to keeping a sharp focus on diversity, inclusion, racial and social justice in order to achieve meaningful progress.

Outlined below are the student leader’s concerns and our responses to each

1. All UVM administration, faculty, and staff must have mandatory diversity training encompassing race, equity, religion, sexuality and gender identities.

We agree that our efforts in this area should be expanded.

We commit to work with others to make this training extend further across the campus, working with other existing shared governance leadership and policy structures. Senior administration will facilitate interaction and progress with the University’s shared governance groups and other relevant individuals and entities.

And, it is important to take stock of what training around diversity is currently in place:

1. **Senior Leadership Diversity Training** – Biannual Leadership Professional Development workshops for all senior leaders, including all deans and vice presidents, offered through the Office of Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs
2. **New Faculty Orientation.** A two-day event mandatory for all incoming faculty. Topics include:
 - a. *Inclusive Excellence at UVM.* The Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs provides an historical overview of diversity efforts at UVM.
 - b. *Diversity, Engagement and Professional Development Panel and Roundtable.* Representatives from the Office of Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs and Office of Affirmative Action, and directors of LGBTQA Center, The Mosaic Center for Students of Color, and Women’s Center provide an overview of the services and assistance available to faculty.
3. **Blackboard Jungle.** Annual day and a half symposium with invited speakers, panel discussions, and workshops that includes students in a community learning opportunity with faculty and staff open to the faculty, staff and students:

“designed to support UVM faculty, staff, and all others seeking to develop skills, knowledge, and a deeper understanding of diversity that supports excellence in teaching, service, and research. The symposium sessions are dedicated to creating “open spaces”

where all members of our community can participate in authentic dialogue, valued reflection, and expanded learning to promote inclusive excellence for all.”

4. **Faculty Development Series** – offers workshops on, among other topics, engaging students and reducing resistance in the diversity classroom.
5. **Administrative units (such as Student Affairs) hold mandatory professional development sessions that encompass a breadth of social identities** and the systemic power, privilege, and oppression that exists in our culture.
6. **New Employee Orientation** - The Office of Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs provides a twice-monthly orientation program for all new staff titled: “*UVM Culture and Community*”. These sessions introduce all new staff members to our UVM principles, ethos and shared values of diversity and inclusion to foster and nourish an open, affirming and respectful workplace, as well as our aspirations as outlined in Our Common Ground: Respect, Integrity, Innovation, Openness, Justice and Responsibility.
7. **Numerous other units on campus provide ongoing diversity training for existing employees.**

2. There must be more hiring and retention of black and brown faculty on tenure.

We agree that we must continue building on the progress we have made in the recruitment and retention of tenure-track instructional faculty of color.

We commit to pursue aggressive strategies to increase the number of faculty of color. It should be noted that hiring of faculty is done by the faculty in their respective departments, colleges, and schools.

Current recruitment initiatives:

1. **Senior Leaders Recruitment** – All senior leadership positions searches (vice presidents and deans) have an instructional sessions on diversity goals and expectations.
2. **Faculty Staffing Proposals** – approval process requires units to work with Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs to develop and present recruitment plans intended to yield a pool of candidates that reflects the diversity among available candidates in the hiring discipline.
3. **Faculty Affirmative Recruitment Training** – mandatory training for search committee members. Multiple sessions offered throughout the year by Human Resource Services recruitment and retention advisor.
4. **Chairs and Associate Deans Training workshop** – review of best practices for attaining diverse pool of candidates.
5. **Group recruitment** – all positions advertised in a high visibility higher education e-

publications and jobs portal to showcase UVM's commitment to diversity (an institutional Diversity Profile statement and Diversity Focus listings).

6. **Outreach and networking** – attendance at conferences and event with high numbers of underrepresented minority participants.
7. **Leadership oversight and directives** – Every faculty search committee is charged with diversity expectations, including new approaches to posting and advertising positions in more effective, visible, and targeted ways.

Current retention efforts:

1. **Faculty Mentoring Program** (Office of the Provost) – for all faculty.
2. **Faculty Professional Development Program** (Office of the Provost) – for all faculty (workshops, panels, speakers).
3. **Office of Diversity, Engagement and Professional Development** (Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs) – for all faculty and staff.
4. **Faculty of Color Retreat** - organized through the College of Arts and Sciences with sponsorship from the Office of Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs and Office of the Provost.
5. **Community Forums** – organized by President's Commission on Inclusive Excellence, and the Office of Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs.
6. **Social gatherings and cultural events**– organized by the Office of Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs.
7. **Percentage of tenure/tenure track faculty of color, Fall 2016:** 14.7%

3. There must be a renovation of D1 and D2 classes.

4. There must be qualified professors teach such courses.

We agree. We are committed to improving the curriculum and instruction of Diversity 1 (D1) and Diversity 2 (D2) courses in the coming months by working closely with the shared governance groups. The General Education requirements and the curriculum more broadly are the purview of the Faculty Senate. We further commit to facilitate opportunities for students to understand the process and provide input to the Faculty Senate as improvements are developed and proposed.

Steps are being taken, currently, to review and assess the Diversity General Education requirement at UVM:

The Chair of the Faculty Senate's Diversity Curriculum Review Committee has the following goals for this current academic year:

- To simplify and reduce the General Education Diversity outcomes from 14 to 4
- To initiate a review of all D1 courses on a 5-year schedule

The Faculty Senate's General Education Diversity Assessment Committee, in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research and the University Assessment Initiative, completed an initial assessment of a sample of D1 courses this past spring using student focus groups led by trained student facilitators, as part of the University Assessment Initiative.

This year the Faculty Senate's General Education Diversity Assessment Committee is undertaking an assessment of a sample of D1 courses using direct evidence: pre-post changes in student performance artifacts as determined by blinded faculty raters. This project is funded by the Office of the Provost and will receive assistance from the University Assessment Initiative and the Office of Institutional Research.

As part of the University Assessment Initiative, the Faculty Senate's General Education Diversity Assessment Committee must develop and implement a sustainable long-term assessment plan by the end of next year. The Committee chairs report progress each semester, and at two retreats each year.

A new General Education website is under construction to make clear to all constituencies the General Education outcomes, transfer credit processes, assessment processes, etc. This will apply to the Diversity requirement as well as the other three General Education requirements. This website is expected later this fall.

A General Education Coordination Committee has been formed under authority of the Faculty Senate. The Chairs of the four General Education Curriculum Review Committees, including the Diversity Curriculum Review Committee, are members of the General Education Coordination Committee. This Committee will coordinate functions and have oversight of the General Education Curriculum Review Committees.

At the Wednesday meeting, the students requested membership and voting rights on these review committees. We noted that while these decisions are within the domain of the Faculty Senate, we would assist in facilitating these request with Faculty Senate leadership.

5. Hate crimes on/off campus be treated as such, named as such, and that perpetrators of these crimes be expelled.

7. The student responsible for removing the Black Lives Matter flag should be expelled for his hate crime.

Although these two concerns were not discussed at the meeting with students, we agree that hate crimes have no place in our community. We will continue to address aggressively these types of issues and work closely with law enforcement and the State's Attorney Office to hold perpetrators accountable to the fullest extent of the law.

Hate Crimes are specifically defined by Vermont state law, determined by the State's Attorney, and adjudicated through the court system. It is important to note that under Vermont law hate crime is based upon a person's intent/motivation and not on the impact of the crime. However, we are in full

agreement that certain incidents have an injurious impact on members of our community, even if they do not meet the legal definition of a hate crime.

In 2014, the University significantly strengthened and improved its Bias Response program. The role of the Bias Response Team is one of education, including to review alleged bias incidents, provide appropriate responses based on the nature of the incident, educate the campus community about civility and inclusion, and how to report a bias incident or potential hate crime. Bias incidents are addressed through interventions as appropriate, such as: education, restorative practices, community dialogue, formal processes through institutional offices (e.g., review, investigation, resolution), and/or referral to local law enforcement (in the case of a possible hate crime).

An established Student Conduct process resolves all allegations of campus policy violations and provides students' their full rights to due process with notification of the allegation, an opportunity to be heard, and an opportunity to appeal the decision when found responsible and given sanctions. First and foremost, this process strives to hold students accountable for their behavior, be educational in nature and protect the rights of all individuals involved. UVM Police Services also refers students to the formal criminal process for violations that may be criminal in nature.

The student involved in the Black Lives Matter Flag theft was afforded a due process procedure and was sanctioned. The student cannot under law be charged or sanctioned again for the same incident that has been adjudicated.

6. Fraternities and sororities must have a new mandatory racial diversity/inclusion/climate/equity training requirement for all incoming and standing members.

We agree.

Since April 2017, the Fraternity and Sorority Life staff within the Department of Student Life has been working diligently on a new model for educational programming on diversity and inclusion. In collaboration with student leaders from identity-based organizations, Fraternity and Sorority Life staff has developed a model of education for the different years of Fraternity and Sorority Life membership. The model will receive ongoing review and assessment.

8. ALANA clubs and identity centers must be put higher in the University's funding priorities.

The funding process through the Student Government Association should be transparent and fully understood.

The Student Government Association has the responsibility to oversee the funding for all student clubs and organizations. We commit to work with the Student Government Association, ALANA/student of color leaders, and all student groups to improve communication and understanding. University leaders will work closely with Student Government Association leadership to determine if ALANA/student of color clubs have received in the past equitable treatment during the funding request and budgeting process and will work with them, if necessary, to insure equity and fairness in all financial decisions and allocations.

In addition, many student initiatives have received significant funding from other University sources. We agree to streamline the funding request process at the central University level and expand those resources as much as is feasible within the financial constraints of the University.

9. UVM must create a separate donation fund for ALANA clubs.

This has been established already at the University's Foundation. Current status:

Move Mountains, the Comprehensive Campaign for the University of Vermont which is scheduled to conclude in June 2019, includes more than \$32M in diversity-related campaign priorities.

Existing diversity-related funds (i.e., those funds which already have been established and to which donors can direct their gifts) include:

- LGBTQA Center Fund
- LGBTQA Rainbow Stoles Fund
- Michael D. Upton, MD LGBTQA Fund
- DeHayes Multicultural Scholarship

There are three ALANA/Mosaic Center gift funds:

- ALANA (Mosaic) Center Fund
- ALANA (Mosaic) Center Mentor Program Fund
- ALANA (Mosaic) Center Emergency Support Fund

There also are many already established student-group donation funds, such as:

- ALANA Gear Club Fund
- Black Student Union Fund
- Alianza Latinx Club Fund
- Asian Student Union Fund

The UVM Foundation has created a new gift fund for any SGA-recognized student group that wants to do fundraising or receives a gift.

There also are a number of existing scholarships that are intended for (and are awarded annually to) students from diverse backgrounds.

Included in the \$32M of diversity-related campaign priorities mentioned above are additional scholarships specifically for students from diverse backgrounds.

10. The George Perkins Building must be renamed

We agree that communicating more information and education on the disturbing history and activities of the eugenics movement should be pursued, as the movement was active for several decades in Vermont, including at UVM. The administration is committed to make this a priority and an important educational opportunity.

To provide context, George Perkins was a longtime and distinguished professor, dean, and interim president at UVM. Perkins Hall is named in his honor. To our knowledge, there is no evidence that George Perkins was involved in the eugenics movement in any way, nor is there information indicating that the subject of eugenics was taught in what is now Perkins Hall.

Dean Perkin's son, UVM Biology faculty member Henry Perkins, was actively involved in the eugenics movement of the early 20th century, a movement recognized now as dehumanizing, painful, and discriminatory. It was a sad chapter in our country's, Vermont's, and the institution's history.

Some argue that the confusion with respect to the Perkins name appearing on a building on campus, as well as the familial relationship between George Perkins and his son Henry, should be sufficient cause to rename the building. However, it would not be appropriate to remove Dean George Perkins' name from Perkins Hall due to the actions of his son, Henry. A plaque has long been in place in Perkins Hall, noting that the building is named after Dean George Perkins. Additional notices of this distinction have been made throughout the years.

Another sad chapter in U.S. history was the regressive era of Senator Joseph McCarthy, during which mere guilt by association was sufficient to ruin careers and lives of thousands of people. As history has recorded, repeating that approach would be antithetical to our country's values and individual rights.

11. Provide retention and graduation rates for students of color

Agreed.

Currently, the Mosaic Center for Students of Color (MCSC) receives data about student of color retention, graduation rates and incoming class demographics. The MCSC would be pleased to share that information with student groups. The Office of Institutional Research can also provide retention and graduation data through their website:

Graduation Rates:

http://www.uvm.edu/~oir/?Page=grad_rates.html&SM=submenu_ret_grad_deg.html

One-year Retention Rates:

http://www.uvm.edu/~oir/?Page=retention_rates.html&SM=submenu_ret_grad_deg.html

As an overview:

- Retention Rates: The average one-year retention rate for students of color from the last five years (fall cohorts 2012-16), is 86%, which is the same rate as white students. This means that, on average, 86% of first year students of color return for their second year at UVM (<http://www.uvm.edu/~oir/retrace5yr.pdf>).
- Graduation Rates: The most recent four-year graduation rate for students of color (<http://www.uvm.edu/~oir/consumer/gradr456.pdf>) is 54% and 64% for white students.

- An additional 25 students would need to graduate for the students of color four-year graduation rate to be comparable to the white students.

Summary

For more than three decades, the University has taken clear and decisive steps to address many of these issues outlined in these most recent concerns. There are many active initiatives and strategic activities that are ongoing or are in the process of being launched. We acknowledge that UVM still has much work to do. We remain steadfast in our commitment to this important effort. We look forward to working with students, and all members of the University community in pursuit of continued progress.