

Sent on Nov. 13, 2015

Dear campus community,

Many of you are aware of a number of incidents taking place on college campuses involving student concerns over racial bias and intolerance. The primary focus has been on the University of Missouri, but the issues that have arisen there are galvanizing students with similar concerns across the nation.

For those of you who share some of these concerns, I'd like you to know that I share them as well. Having personally experienced and witnessed incidents of bias and racism while in college, I am very sensitive to these issues, and the harm – intended or unintended – they can cause. One particular incident I experienced led me to apply early to medical school so that I could leave college. That was many years ago, but I vividly recall it.

As president of Wayne State University, fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment is among my top priorities. A recent important step in this respect is the hiring of Marquita Chamblee, our chief diversity officer. In the short time Marquita has been with us, she has been a presence throughout the campus, and is already making a very positive difference. Marquita recently hired Leonard Savala, who is our new director of the Office of Multicultural Student Engagement.

Additionally, our recently created five-year strategic plan identifies diversity and inclusion as both a fundamental value and an area of strategic focus for all of our schools, colleges, and divisions.

As a public, urban research university, Wayne State's diversity is a strength. But we can never take this for granted, and must maintain a high degree of vigilance to be sure we continue to grow as an inclusive community.

To help us come together as a community to create and sustain the kind of campus environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging and support, The Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Multicultural Student Engagement are planning a campus dialog for Monday, November 16 at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Undergraduate Library. I encourage you to attend and participate.

I can assure you that furthering a campus culture that embraces all people is one of my highest priorities, and while we will continue positive steps forward, any acts of intolerance, exclusion, or bias – for any reason – will be addressed firmly and promptly.

Thank you for helping us make Wayne State a welcoming, inclusive place for all.

M. Roy Wilson
President