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We should develop leaders and leadership that amplify and promote inclusion and diversity in our campus community, in the region, and in the state — thus making the U of A the premier resource on inclusion and diversity for the public and private sectors.

Over the last couple years, the university has taken some innovative steps under the leadership of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion, Yvette Murphy-Erby, in pursuit of our guiding priority, Enriching Campus Diversity and Inclusion. Among these were the creation of a Diversity Leaders Team, the formation of the Student Diversity Ambassadors and Faculty and Staff Diversity Champions volunteer groups to complement a number of unit diversity officers and teams, and the establishment of the IDEALS Institute (discussed further below). Over the same time we have also continued to make progress on diversifying our campus community, though there is still work to be done. Indeed, Murphy-Erby has convinced me that the pursuit of diversity and inclusion “is a journey, not a destination.” The goalposts will always be changing.

A case in point: it was not that long ago that Diversity Affairs became the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. This needed change reflected a growing awareness that if our campus was not inclusive it would undermine efforts to recruit people from diverse backgrounds: they would either leave or decline to come in the first place. Inclusivity is a necessary precondition for diversity to flourish. So we updated the name to reflect that understanding. More recently, Murphy-Erby has made the case for the three-legged stool of diversity, inclusion and equity — equity in simply recognizing that people may need different levels of support and assistance to reach their goals due to obstacles and barriers unique to their situation. So know that this is not about simply setting hard diversity goals. It’s a journey. It’s about continually evolving the culture and climate of our campus. It’s about viewing everything we do through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion. Much like our graduation rates have risen not by setting specific

goals but rather by addressing the underlying reasons students don’t persist, I believe focusing on being more inclusive and equitable will inevitably lead to a more diverse campus community.

So what are some things we should be doing now? First, I think we should work harder to develop best practices for recruiting and retaining underrepresented faculty, staff and students. This means looking at the language we use in advertising jobs, where we advertise, and how we can get prospective students and faculty to campus. After all, if we keep doing the same things, we’ll keep getting the same results. Sometimes the biggest challenge is overcoming past perceptions of the university, both inside and outside the state, so finding ways to get people on campus to see and experience it with their own eyes can change the dialogue. As an example, the office of D&I will be supporting the Department of Sociology and Criminology’s efforts to host a national symposium on social justice since graduate students and future faculty are likely to attend. The idea is that it is much easier to envision yourself working at the university when you’re already there, trying it on for size, so to speak. So we’ll need to keep finding innovative ways to get prospective faculty and staff on campus to see what we have to offer. We should also pursue institutional change grants. An example of this is an Aspire grant (partners include the NSF, APLU, and the *National Alliance for Inclusive & Diverse STEM Faculty*). This grant provides an opportunity to participate in a three-year institutional change effort designed to help reform recruitment, hiring, and retention practices. There are others opportunities like this one out there, so we simply need to be more aggressive in identifying and applying for them.

It's equally important that we get out and engage in the community, particularly communities that are under-represented on campus. These communities need to see and interact with recruiters and counselors in their schools, and even faculty doing research and outreach. They need to see that we are invested, interested and engaged in them, especially parents of prospective students. They need to know their children are in good hands here. It's also important that they see people like themselves. In fact, D&I is planning to get out into specific underserved areas of the state, similar to the faculty bus tour the chancellor and provost host every year. The more partnerships we can build with a community (like the College Access Initiative,) the more likely members of that community will be able to envision their children, or themselves, attending college here on campus.

We must also continue to work on a comprehensive campus inclusion and diversity plan that includes faculty, staff and students. As it is, each university unit is required to have a D&I plan, and to update it annually. Because everyone's voice and perspective matters, the units are required to engage all members in discussing the plan and determining what is needed to continue advancing the plan. In conducting such assessments and reviews, units are expected to ask critical questions: What policies are working? How is D&I being included into curriculum and hiring? Where are the weaknesses? What's portable from one unit to another? Again, the purpose isn't to set a quota, but to ensure we have a living, evolving plan, not some obligatory document that's tucked away in a drawer somewhere. The goal is and always will be continuous improvement. As such, we need to hold senior leadership accountable — and I include myself in this. I encourage you to see what the D&I plan is in your unit. Is it a living document that's updated annually? Are there ways you can contribute new ideas? I encourage everyone to get involved in their unit's planning.

Finally, a few words about the IDEALS Institute that was launched last fall. IDEALS is an acronym for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access, Leadership, Development & Strategic Supports. If the Office of Diver-

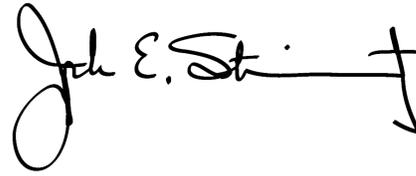
sity and Inclusion is largely focused internally on the university, then the IDEALS Institute is the branch of D&I that faces outward to the state, although IDEALS is also providing some campus support. The IDEALS team provides a comprehensive range of activities, including training, assessment, education, consulting and research to organizations outside the university. Though they've barely got the walls painted and their voicemail set up, the IDEALS team has already provided education and training to the University of Arkansas-Rich Mountain, the Arkansas chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Northwest Arkansas Human Resources Association, and a variety of other businesses, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies.

A key feature of the IDEALS Institute is that it was designed to be self-sustaining through grants, philanthropic support, and revenue generated from its services. Almost immediately after opening its doors, the IDEALS team secured "a two-year grant from the United Way of Northwest Arkansas totaling \$213,000 to support economic mobility for low- and moderate-income Marshallese residents." More recently, the Association of American Colleges and Universities invited the U of A, through the IDEALS Institute, to host a Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Campus Center, which will provide access to additional resources and training. The IDEALS Institute currently has a lean staff of five and is still getting established. But as it develops, wins grants, and makes connections across the state, I think it will more than prove its worth. I anticipate it becoming a major resource for the private and public sector. Perhaps, in time we will be able to expand their staff, or at least provide additional support through graduate assistants and internship opportunities. The early indicators are extremely promising. In fact, I could see us opening a satellite office of the IDEALS Institute in Bentonville as part of our proposed facility there to better interface with the corporate community there. Personally, I think assisting external stakeholders in their diversity and inclusion planning is an extension of our land-grant mission. We should be a major resource and driver of change for our state, and the IDEALS Institute can play a crucial role in that.

Let me underscore one final point: our goal isn't to create a bunch of new programs. The goal is to look at everything we're already doing, whether it's hiring and recruitment, outreach, curriculum development, or something else, and see if there is a way we can thread diversity and inclusion through it. And more importantly, I think we need to remind everyone that D&I isn't any one person's job. No one person or unit can change the culture and climate by fiat. It's on each and

every one of us to create an inclusive environment. We all have a role to play in creating an equitable, inclusive and diverse campus. I hope everyone will step up and make our campus more welcoming and more inclusive.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe E. Steinmetz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joe Steinmetz,
Chancellor, University of Arkansas