

Remarks from President Wilson-Oyelaran at the June 4, Community meeting

Opening Remarks:

Welcome and thanks for coming this morning. Over the last eight weeks approximately 50 students, faculty and staff have brought their passion, intellect, creativity and best thinking to improving the experience of students who are marginalized on this campus. Their work has focused on four areas: Student Development, Spaces of Belonging, Professional Development and Training, and Curriculum.

I have had an opportunity to speak with some of the members of these working groups and I know that this work has been difficult, demanding and sometimes stressful. I am grateful to those who stayed in this work, despite the difficulties.

These groups met from 4th through 9th week, most, meeting twice a week. Additionally, they conducted research between meetings and visited other campuses. Given the short time frame, the work they have accomplished is substantial and I would like to publically thank them for this effort. Will all the members of the working groups please stand so we can show our appreciation?

I am also very grateful to Mia Henry, ED ACSJL who served as the coordinator for the various IC working groups. She has shepherded this effort with compassion, grace and deep insight, and I am most grateful. Mia will now come up to provide more information about this morning's program. I should also note that Mia will serve as the time keeper. We want to make sure each group has time to present, that we can take a few questions and then wrap up with closing statements...Mia

Response to the Working Group Recommendations:

President's Staff received the executive summaries on Friday of last week and met to review them on Tuesday. Several President Staff members, but not all, have been able to read the full reports. As I mentioned earlier we will provide a more formal response after graduation. We will post it on the web site and provide info for all members of the campus community (including our current seniors) on where

it can be found. With an upcoming board meeting, graduation and finals we cannot move any faster than that.

With this caveat in mind, let me share the following responses:

Curriculum:

1. President's Staff affirms the recommendations in the curriculum report and strongly encourages the faculty to actively engage in the curriculum and pedagogical development work outlined in the report.
2. The Provost will use some portion of his discretionary Faculty Development monies to support and reward this work.
3. The Library is already working with faculty to identify relevant resources.
4. The Fall 2015 faculty orientation program will begin the effort to incorporate consideration of the multifaceted needs of our diverse student body.

Student Development:

1. The College will hire a director of Intercultural Student Life whom we hope can start before or very soon after the opening of the 2015-16 academic year.
2. We will finalize the job description as soon as possible and it will incorporate the responsibility for direction and management of the Intercultural Center.
3. We will work to make the process for identifying this individual as inclusive as possible and will look for ways to ensure student input via technology as well as through the physical presence of students who may be in the local area during the summer. We will be soliciting names of students who might wish to participate in the selection process both in person and virtually.
4. The Stu Dev group had not yet completed the position paper that will inform the selection of the DICS. We hope members of this taskforce who have indicated an interest in continuing will complete this document as soon as possible. We will be soliciting names of others who might wish to be involved in the development of the position paper.

Spaces of Belonging:

1. By Fall, 2015 the College will establish an Intercultural Center: a visible, dedicated, physical space that builds community by providing services and programming that supports, embraces and celebrates our richly diverse student body. The center programming will have primary focus on individuals and groups who currently are marginalized on campus. The specific location will be determined in early July and communicated to the campus community.
2. The programmatic recommendations that emerged from the Stu Dev group and the Spaces of Belonging group share many similarities. As the new DICSL launches the IC, this individual will receive counsel and support from two groups: a Student Advisory Board and a welcoming team that will include representatives from the many areas where opportunities for collaboration exist: for example ACSJL, CCPD, OSI, Advising, and the Chapel.
3. The College accepts full responsibility for the on-going need to make all spaces on campus anti oppressive spaces in which every student feels that they belong and can thrive.
4. President's Staff is also very mindful of the issues raised in the taskforce report regarding the erosion of trust and the lack of transparency between a segment of the campus population and the administration including the STUDEV division. We take this concern quite seriously and also recognize that many in StuDev and the administration have devoted considerable time and energy to this work over many years. Building/repairing relationships is not an easy task; however, it is a part of, if not central to, effective intercultural work. Repairing relationships also requires a willingness of all involved to engage in the work of repair. I am hopeful that working together this breach can be addressed.

Training:

1. President's Staff shares the view that continued training is essential if our campus is to achieve its aspiration to be an equitable, anti-oppressive community in which everyone has a sense of belonging.

2. It also recognizes that a multiplicity of approaches and content must be available. The content must focus on increasing the intercultural competence of faculty, staff and students; enhancing the capacity of faculty to employ inclusive pedagogy; engendering an anti-oppression lens among all members of the community and providing the tools needed to promote a sense of belonging for every member of our community. We affirm the value of ERACE training and recognize that no one suite of trainings can adequately address all of these issues.
3. We agree with the taskforce that the first step will be to conduct an audit in Fall 2015 to assess participation in past trainings and identify future needs for current faculty, staff and students.
4. The College is currently exploring the creation of a new position (title undetermined) whose responsibilities will include identifying, organizing and managing professional development in the areas noted above. This individual will also serve as the institution's Title IX coordinator and, as such, will provide training that will foster a community of sexual respect on campus and will ensure that K's policies and procedures not only comply with Title IX but reflect the very best practice in this area. We will consult with a variety of individuals on campus in the development of this position and hope to have a position description developed by mid-July.
5. We will work to make the process for identifying this individual as inclusive as possible and will look for ways to ensure student input via technology as well as through the presence of students who may be in the local area during the summer. We will be soliciting names of students who might wish to participate in the selection process both in person and virtually.

These are the commitments we can make at this time. I am very grateful for the work of so many and know that we have a great deal of work before us. I hope you will all continue to be engaged.

There are many ways that students, faculty and staff can be involved as we continue this difficult and important work. If you are interested in participating please contact Mia Henry at mhenry@kzoo.edu.

We will continue to provide updates throughout the summer.