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Letter - University Conversations on Diversity and Inclusivity

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University Conversations on Diversity and Inclusivity

November 23, 2015

To the University community,

In recent weeks, colleges and universities across the country have engaged in important, and sometimes difficult, discussions regarding the experiences of students of color. It is time for University of the Pacific to sharpen and focus our community's conversations about diversity, affirm our shared commitment to inclusivity, reflect honestly about the challenges faced by students - as well as faculty and staff - from underrepresented groups, and make more progress in improving the Pacific experience for diverse members of our community.

A university does not serve any student well if it does not welcome, respect and honor diversity. A university that does not serve underrepresented groups or strive to educate its entire community about inclusivity is shirking a fundamental component of American higher education, not to mention failing to prepare its students for a meaningful life. Shamefully, at even the most prestigious institutions, students of color as well as LGBTQIA, disabled, religiously-identified, low-income, undocumented and other diverse groups of students continue to experience marginalization and insufficient support.

University of the Pacific is fully committed to the principles of inclusive excellence. Enhancing our diversity and inclusivity is part of the institutional priorities we have identified for the next 18-24 months. We will follow the lead of our students, whose activism and club programming in recent years has been vital to the progress Pacific has made on diversity and inclusion. We will also build on the good work taking place in divisions and units across the University. **But we will raise the intensity of that work to an institutional level, taking an unflinching look at the work still needed to reflect our values and commitment.**

For one, it has taken too long to broadly address the recommendations of the 2012 Diversity Task Force at an institutional level. Several recommendations have been instituted (e.g., the formation of a Bias Response Team, enhanced intercultural training, improved processes for faculty hiring, etc.). Yet critical areas remain to be addressed. The racial and ethnic background of our student body, for instance, has yet to align with that of college-ready students in our surrounding communities. Until recently, we did not have a leadership model for promoting and attending to

diversity concerns across the University. Moreover, while we have made progress in enhancing service to veterans and adult learners, we need to enhance our resources for students with disabilities.

These issues are too important to wait any longer. Efforts are underway across the University right now that will have a significant impact. Increasing the diversity of our students is an important part of the Strategic Enrollment Plan currently being developed. We have increased staffing in the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities. We are searching for a Director of African American Student Support and Success who will partner with units across the University to enhance the Pacific experience of our African American students. Our Latino Community Outreach program conducts nearly three dozen recruitment/pipeline programs a year. And, as part of our comprehensive fundraising campaign, we are working with donors interested in expanding access to Pacific for low-income and first-generation college students. **These efforts are all happening at the present moment. Recommendations and a timeline for additional curricular and co-curricular actions will come in the spring.**

In spring 2016, Pacific's Diversity Leadership Team (DLT) will make recommendations for a **Diversity Implementation Plan** informed by the 2012 Task Force Report. In September, I charged the DLT, comprising Assistant Provost Chris Goff (representing faculty), Senior Associate Vice President Steve Jacobson (students) and Assistant Vice President Sondra Roeuny (staff), to lead Pacific's diversity efforts. This semester the DLT has held open listening sessions on each campus to discuss key issues relating to the implementation plan. Sessions such as these help us to be more reflective, collaborative, and intentional in our interactions and in the planning we do to nurture and sustain a diverse campus community. The DLT is also working with Academic Council, Staff Advisory Council, and ASUOP to formalize a University Diversity Committee. I thank everyone who has participated in their efforts, and encourage our entire community to rally together around diversity and inclusion.

We at Pacific intend to be a university that embraces and celebrates all people. We have a ways to go to achieve that goal, but by working together, we can make real progress. **If any group would like to talk with the DLT or with me about these issues, now or at any time in the future, please contact any of the three members or visit me in my office hours, which can be found on the [President's Office webpage](#).**

In the coming days the Pacific community will disperse to share the Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends. **I wish everyone a peaceful and happy holiday, and sincerely thank you for the work you have done and will do to help realize inclusive excellence at Pacific.**

In gratitude,

Pam Eibeck