

Jan. 29, 2021

To: St. Mary's University Community

From: Tom Mengler, President

Subject: President's Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In August, I announced the formation of a President's Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) to "advance St. Mary's efforts to become and stand firmly as an anti-racist university." I charged the President's Council to act with a sense of urgency and to develop a set of recommendations, at least some of which St. Mary's could begin to implement as early as this spring semester. I am pleased to inform you that the Council has completed and submitted its report, as well as an **executive summary**.

I first want to congratulate and thank Council members for their timely and outstanding efforts, especially its Chair, Professor of Law André Hampton, and Vice Chair Sheri King, Director of Student Life, for their leadership and the many hours they have dedicated to the Council and its report. Please join me in thanking members of the President's Council.

Since receiving their report, I have met with Council members, as well as with the University's Executive and Leadership Councils. Our discussions have centered on identifying initiatives we can undertake this spring — beginning with those that are likely to set us on a successful pathway grounded in the St. Mary's mission as Catholic and Marianist. I am pleased to let you know that our discussions have resulted in some foundational steps.

I set forth these initial steps using the four-part organizational structure of the report itself:

1. Individual Discovery

Because, as the report states, "solutions begin with individual awareness and education," the DEI Council and I will be hosting the first of, hopefully, ongoing community dialogues — this one virtual — on **Wednesday, Feb. 17**, and **Thursday, Feb. 18**, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. All faculty and staff will be invited to register for and attend one of these two dialogues, during which you will learn more about the report and have the opportunity to ask questions.

Additionally, I encourage you to attend two other virtual programs:

Feb. 4, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., The Defamation Experience: Breaking Barriers through Diversity Programming, sponsored by Student Life and open to the entire community.

Feb. 24, 7 to 8:30 p.m., Lin Great Speakers Series: A Conversation on Race, Equality and Equity, Conference on Justice and Social Concerns, sponsored by the Center on Catholic Studies.

Conversations and education about DEI can also be promoted through web-based resources. We are forming a work group to assist in the development of web-based educational resources on DEI, which will be posted on St. Mary's website for the use of faculty, staff and students, as well as prospective students, alumni and the broader community.

As you know, there are many web-based assessment tools that help individuals understand their own implicit biases and encourage personal growth. As a first step toward introducing these implicit bias assessment tools more broadly within our community of faculty, staff and students, the Leadership Council — which includes me, our vice presidents, deans and other administrative leaders — will be undergoing a few of these assessments. The Leadership Council and I view these assessments as helpful to better understand the work ahead for the St. Mary's community.

2. Institutional Discovery

The report notes that to become anti-racist, St. Mary's must also assess and then address its internal environment, processes and operations. Following the Council's recommendation, we are, therefore, establishing a work group to develop cultural climate assessment surveys for faculty, staff and students.

These surveys will generate data on how the members of the campus view the University environment, practices and policies in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion. These surveys will also help us to assess the quality and effectiveness of the policies and procedures in promoting DEI. All faculty, staff and students will be invited to complete a survey later this spring.

3. Curriculum and Co-Curriculum

The report makes several curricular recommendations, "because if the University desires to cultivate its students to be effective advocates against racial injustice," St. Mary's must incorporate DEI in the modes by which faculty and staff educate students and foster their formation into leaders for the common good. We are establishing a work group to begin discussions about how best to advance consideration of the council's curricular recommendations by the provost and deans, faculty, and The First-Year Experience Committee.

4. Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Outreach

The report recommends that St. Mary's establish an Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to support and lead DEI efforts and ensure they are maintained and continue to progress in the coming years. We are forming a work group to develop a position description for the leadership of this office, with the objective of beginning a search this spring and establishing the office by the beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year.

Conclusion

The handful of initiatives we will undertake this spring are only first steps. We should regard these as the beginning of a long-term commitment to focus our Marianist values so deeply embedded in St. Mary's — humility, community and respect for each other — on matters of racial justice in our own community and throughout American society.

Thank you to the members of the President's Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:

- **André Hampton, J.D.**, Professor of Law, School of Law – Chair
- **Sheri King, Ph.D.**, Director of Student Life – Vice Chair
- **Crystal Andrade**, president, Student Bar Association
- **Brother Dennis Bautista, S.M., Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of Communication Studies, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- **Tim Bessler, Ed.D.**, Vice Provost for Student Development and Dean of Students
- **Robbie Bishop-Monroe, D.B.A.**, Assistant Professor of Accounting, Greehey School of Business
- **Verónica Contreras-Shannon, Ph.D.**, Professor of Biological Sciences, School of Science, Engineering and Technology
- **Andrea Escalon**, University Police Officer
- **Hailey Stewart**, president, Black Student Union
- **Alan Haynes, J.D.**, Assistant Dean for Law Student Affairs
- **Miriam "Lindsey" Johnson (B.B.A. '14)**, senior financial compliance analyst, Whole Foods
- **Valeria García Lara (B.B.A. '18)**, case management aide at Seton Home
- **Byron Martinez**, president, Student Government Association
- **Guillermo "Memo" Martinez, J.D.**, Visiting Assistant Professor of Marketing, Greehey School of Business
- **Harold McCall (J.D. '07)**, Attorney at Wayne Wright LLP
- **Rick Sperling, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of Psychology, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

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