

We Are All Boilermakers: Attaining a Climate of Respect and Inclusion

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The 2017-18 academic year has seen increasing unrest around issues of race, ethnicity and nationality in our country, and our campus has not been spared from incidents of racism and anti-Semitism. Against this backdrop, we have reaffirmed and reminded our students, faculty and staff that respect, acceptance, and inclusion are — and will remain — core values of Purdue University. We want all members of our Purdue community to feel welcome on our campus, to have a positive experience, and most importantly, to be able to achieve their highest aspirations. And we expect everyone to treat others at all times with respect and with dignity.

These are more than words at Purdue and there is much work being done to support a more diverse and inclusive campus. The number of underrepresented minorities in our undergraduate population increased 9.6 percent to 2,968 in 2017 and our underrepresented graduate and professional school population increased 5.1 percent to 881 over 2016 (Purdue Data Digest). First-year international students for fall of 2017 hailed from 71 countries (vs. 65 last year) and more than 30 percent of these international freshmen were women, which is one of the highest percentages, if not the highest ever, for Purdue. Overall, a total of 16 percent of our undergraduates are international students and 9.6 percent are underrepresented minorities.

Our underrepresented tenure-track faculty total 148, up from 107 in 2007 (38 percent increase) and the number of women tenure-track faculty now total 579, up from 477 in 2007 (21 percent increase). While we have seen progress in both areas, there is more work to be done and we will continue to actively explore new approaches to recruiting women and underrepresented faculty, staff, and students to Purdue, and just as importantly, do all we can to provide an environment that supports their success.

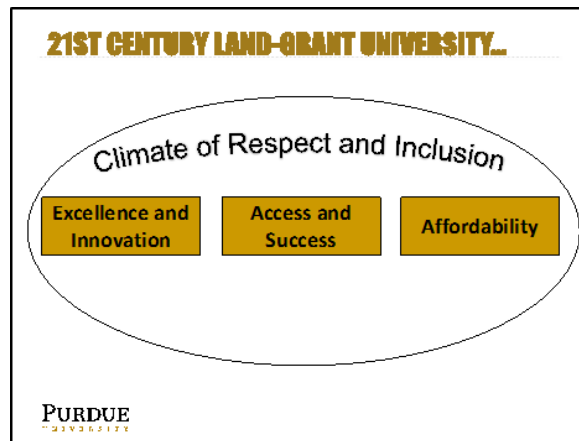
Our goal is to position Purdue as the world's leading example of the 21st century land-grant university — a global model of excellence in the land-grant missions of learning, discovery and engagement. To that end, I have identified four themes that I believe undergird the successful 21st century land-grant institution: 1) excellence and innovation, 2) access and success, 3) affordability, and 4) a climate of respect and inclusion. The level of our success in the first three areas will be heavily dependent on our commitment to and progress with the fourth.

There are many excellent programs and initiatives currently aimed at supporting a climate of respect and inclusion at Purdue. That said, we have not done an especially good job of sharing best practices and lessons learned, coordinating efforts, and communicating results across the campus. One of my goals as chief diversity officer is to help create a stronger network among the

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individuals and groups directly responsible for diversity and inclusion programs — and all others who wish to contribute — so that we can achieve the greatest possible impact. As avid listeners, we are working to identify where Purdue can take proactive measures to connect efforts, to identify important gaps in activity, to better assess impact, and to ultimately enhance a climate of respect and inclusion that supports success for students, faculty and staff. Against the backdrop of the national challenges to our ambitions here, and with the understanding that it is impossible to prevent random acts of racism and discrimination, we can all work to mitigate the impacts of these acts on our Purdue community.



We have an excellent starting point: the Provost’s Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, formed under Provost Deba Dutta, developed a [road map](#) of specific actions to help us recruit, retain, and build a more positive climate for undergraduate students, graduate students, post docs, staff, and faculty. This road map is ambitious, it encompasses our entire campus and lays down a specific agenda to pursue.

To help us move our efforts here to a higher plane, we have initiated a national search for a vice provost of diversity and inclusion. As announced in the Conversations about Inclusion panel on February 23, 2018, I expect to appoint an experienced professional with demonstrated leadership and deep insight into issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity, and someone who will be a bridge-builder on our campus.

It is easy to talk about the importance of the ideas of diversity and inclusion. It is more difficult to define and deliver on a set of initiatives that help us build a better Purdue. Actions we recommend, pursue, foster, and adopt will be key to an even more diverse Purdue. The many benefits of a diverse workforce are well documented — and employers who come to our campus want to recruit from a diverse pool of students. These same employers also want students who are prepared to work in a multicultural world. The Office of the Provost will continue to support initiatives to help us promote success for every member of the Purdue community and I encourage everyone to find their place in our work. In the end, beyond the programs and initiatives we will launch and support as a University, our Purdue culture is ultimately determined by the way each of us interacts with every individual we come in contact with every day.

In that spirit, my request is that all of us treat every member of the Purdue family with the dignity and respect they deserve. In the end, no matter our race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, status as a veteran, political affiliation, or any of the myriad of ways we can think about our differences, we are all Boilermakers.