

Welcoming All in Our Community

By Joel Seligman

We characterize our University's core values as our commitments to academic excellence, academic freedom, diversity, and our community. We are a values-driven University, and our values are perpetual.

We have long valued diversity and have been committed to creating and maintaining campuses that are welcoming and respectful to all.

Diversity at our University includes not only respect for persons of all races, religions, genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientations, but also diversity of viewpoint. We value all individuals who participate here as students, faculty, or staff, regardless of their intellectual beliefs.

In the past 11 years, we have made notable progress in advancing racial and gender diversity and increasing the number of underrepresented faculty, students, and staff. We still have much work to do to achieve a University where all feel supported and respected.

On November 29, 2016, I accepted the principal recommendations of the Final Report of the Presidential Commission on Race and Diversity. The report was the culmination of a process that began in the fall



Implementation Committee of leaders from offices throughout the University. The recommendation to establish the Presidential Diversity Council underscores the importance of having at the table those administrative and academic leaders most directly responsible for running the University and allocating resources.

Each school will be expected to clearly articulate its programs for recruiting, retaining, and graduating a diverse student body consistent with our core values and

With respect to staff, our focus in part will be on the senior levels of staff and providing career development programs that offer opportunities for promotion of all employees.

Achieving a University that is welcoming to all is about more than numbers. It also is about climate and culture. There is much to be proud of on our campuses in terms of the extent to which we have become an increasingly diverse—and indeed international—institution in recent decades. But we were reminded throughout the process led by the Commission on Race and Diversity that there remain instances where individuals feel marginalized because of their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. This is unacceptable. We aspire to be a University that is a magnet for the most talented faculty, students, and staff—quite literally in the world. To fully achieve this, the realities of what kind of community we are profoundly matters.

The final report of the Commission on Race and Diversity is detailed with more than 100 pages and 19 appendices, providing a comprehensive and nuanced view of the state of race and diversity at our University. The report was the culmination of a thorough process of analyzing exten-

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of 2015, when I charged the commission to provide a comprehensive review of University policies and procedures with respect to race and diversity as they affect our students, faculty, and staff.

The principal recommendations of the report address Leadership, Students, Faculty, Staff, Climate, and Community.

Specifically, I have established a Presidential Diversity Council as a centralized committee of senior University leaders from across the University to promote and strengthen the University's race and diversity commitments. To coordinate implementation of the Presidential Diversity Council's decisions, I will also establish a Presidential Diversity Council

applicable law. In the recent United States Supreme Court case of *Fisher v. Texas*, a majority of the court reaffirmed, "enrolling a diverse student body promotes cross-racial understanding, helps to break down racial stereotypes, and enables students to better understand persons of different races. Equally important, student body diversity promotes learning outcomes, and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society."

Each school also will be expected to pursue clearly articulated plans to attract and retain a diverse faculty. Key issues here include the pipeline of outstanding candidates and developing diverse applicant pools for faculty searches.

sive employment and enrollment data, survey responses, and holding a series of town halls and meetings to solicit input from all constituencies. After the report was circulated, I received valuable input from our community through a series of town hall meetings and confidential email communications.

I am deeply grateful to Paul Burgett and Richard Feldman, both longtime deans and advisors who chaired the commission, and to the entire commission for their hard work over the past year. I am optimistic that the commission's report and recommendations will enable us to become the welcoming and inclusive community that we aspire to be. 