

November 17, 2020

Dear UNIS Community Members,

Barely three months have passed since I moved from my longtime position in the Humanities department to the newly created post, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). I've been focused so much on the demands of a start-up that I've neglected to take a moment to let everyone know just what DEI at UNIS is about, what our plans are and how you can become involved.

Questions that some have asked are, "*Why DEI at UNIS? Aren't we already diverse?*" The answer is yes, we are incredibly diverse in some ways, but there are some groups who are underrepresented and have not had the same positive experiences as others. Specifically, as we heard in the recent voices of alumni in [BlackatUNIS](#), parents and faculty, our black community members have not always experienced an inclusive and welcoming environment in our school. In an ideal world the job of director of DEI wouldn't exist and I wouldn't be writing this message, but it does and I am. We must do better.

*Director of Diversity and Equity and Inclusion? What is that? What do you do?* Ultimately our goal is to create and maintain a safe, diverse, equitable and inclusive teaching and learning environment for all. This involves comprehensive, systemic and ongoing work. Sorry, no quick fixes. We've already begun and will continue to address this in a variety of ways which include students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni and parents.

Over the summer we witnessed the creation of the student [Equity & Inclusion Board \(EIB\)](#) and the subsequent Black Student Union. I'm sure you've heard about some of the amazing [EIB accomplishments](#) including a voter awareness and registration drive, a mentoring program on both campuses and throughout all four divisions, and plans for activism training workshops. They've been so busy and dedicated to their mission that it's hard to keep up with them, but T2 Maya Mukherjee caught up with them and wrote a fine [article](#) in *UNISVerse*.

As Director of DEI I've also been working closely with parent groups. The Parent Association has established a DEI committee and selected their co-chairs: Cynthia Muffuh, a human rights attorney and the mother of a JS student, and Lamson Lam, an MS father who is an educational administrator and anti-bias/anti-racism specialist. They bring a wealth of experience, insight and dedication to the table, and we are looking to present a DEI lecture series and other events.

Following the anti-racism training that we had in August, we've begun what will be ongoing [conversations on bias](#) with parents and faculty. Our professional development in February will contain a large DEI component of both curricular focus and anti-bias/anti-racism training. In the meantime, teachers are already participating in the many [DEI webinars and workshops](#) available. One of the up sides of this hybrid-remote world in which we're living is that now we can access a wider array of activities online and we can participate at any level of engagement we choose (you can be the loudest voice on the call or even attend a webinar while in pajamas or cooking dinner).

In an effort to bring DEI into the classroom, UN Day in the Middle School highlighted the [UN Decade of People of African Descent](#) (2015-24). Also, be sure to check out T4 Sophia Lenczowski's podcast on [Verses](#) when I had a chance to sit down and chat with her.

Our diversity, equity and inclusion work is well underway but we have much more to do. We are looking to further developing DEI training to support teachers in curricular and pedagogical ways, as well as anti-bias/anti-racism training for all faculty, staff and administration. Soon we will solicit proposals to identify which resources best fit our needs. To ensure this effort is systemic and sustaining, we will establish a DEI Advisory Council which will include representatives from our school's various constituencies. Among other things, the Council will work with the administration and Human Resources to set policy that addresses bias incidents, with an aim to be both consequential and restorative. Another task is to increase representation of underrepresented populations, both in our student and faculty bodies.

And while there is much to do, it's not lost on me that we are in a very exciting moment in history. While the office of diversity, equity and inclusion was born out of a painful

constellation of experiences, there is an air of promise. It is in this particular November, which is also Native American Heritage Month, that we've witnessed the shattering of glass ceilings thanks to the likes of U.S. Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris and Major League Baseball General Manager Kim Ng. Further, and the SpaceX Resilience we see a crew as diverse as the once sci-fi Starship Enterprise. These are all good things.

Many of you have approached me with questions, concerns and to discuss issues in general. To follow up, I'll be sending out a survey to solicit interest to identify specific ways in which we'll proceed. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to me. I look forward to more conversations and collaborations, virtually for now, and in person again in the not too distant future. Be safe. Be well.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith King-Calnek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Judith" being the most prominent.

Judith King-Calnek, PhD

Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion