
From: Kimberly A. Barrett
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2017 7:53 AM
To: FACULTY-L; STAFF-L; STUDENT-L
Subject: Diversity, Liberal Education and the New Year
Importance: High

Dear Lawrence students, faculty and staff,

Welcome to a new term, a new year and a new opportunity to make our community an even more ideal place in which to work and learn. It is the perfect time to remember the unique opportunity we have in education to influence the world in which we live. By now you know I am a fan of bell hooks' writing, and this time of year brings to mind a quote from her book *Teaching to Transgress*:

“The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom.” (p. 207)

And helping people gain the knowledge and skills needed to practice freedom (or liber, Latin for freedom) is what liberal education is all about. Some of these skills include the ability to think critically but with compassion and to speak assertively but with civility and respect for those who hold a different point of view. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, in collaboration with many of you, will be offering a number of opportunities to practice and model these skills this term.

One of these is our Community Conversations series. These are structured dialogues that facilitate authentic communication across critical areas of perceived difference. The purpose is to promote increased understanding, trust and collaboration. During Winter Term, we will begin two new dialogues. One will be a discussion to help find common ground across political ideologies. The first of three conversations in this Common Ground series will be held Friday, Jan. 13, 1–4 p.m., in the Esch Hurvis Room of the Warch Campus Center. The other new conversation series will invite students and faculty to come together to discuss activism and effective strategies for promoting social change. The first of this series will be held in February. Details will be available soon on [our website](#).

We will also continue our Community Conversation on Safety. This is a dialogue between the Lawrence community and the Appleton Police Department. The next discussion will be held Thursday, Feb. 9, 8:30–noon, in the Nathan Marsh Pusey Room of the Warch Campus Center. To register to participate in these dialogues and to find additional ways to get involved with efforts to make Lawrence more inclusive, [visit the “Get Involved” web page on the Diversity and](#)

[Inclusion website](#). You can also sign up to participate in a Community Conversation by emailing div-inclusion@lawrence.edu.

Finally, I ask that you mark your calendars for our first regional diversity conference. It will focus on inclusive pedagogy. The theme is “Teaching All Students Well: Preparing an educated citizenry for wise participation in a diverse democracy.” Derald Wing Sue, professor of psychology and education at Teachers College, Columbia University will deliver the keynote. The conference will also feature several concurrent sessions to highlight the work being done locally to practice inclusive pedagogy. It will be held Aug. 17–18 at the Warch Campus Center.

In conclusion, as we consider the possibilities that the privilege of a Lawrence education provides in this new year, let’s not forget the responsibilities that accompany it. As one of the most famous founders of our nation, Thomas Jefferson, stated in 1779, “Those persons, whom nature has endowed with genius and virtue, should be rendered by liberal education worthy to receive, and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens.”

Best wishes for a happy new year!



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