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Subject: A New Year's Resolution for LU

Welcome to 2020 Lawrentians!

At the beginning of each new year we have the opportunity to look back with gratitude on the good fortune we have experienced over the past 12 months and to look forward with hope for what the future holds. In this process we take stock of what we have done that has worked well and what has not. Having engaged in this reflection many of us commit (or resolve) to new ways of being that will improve our quality of life and the lives of others. This month we not only herald the beginning of a new year but also a new decade. Think for a moment about where you were in 2010. Some of us were in grade school, others were finishing graduate school, while yet others were already hard at work making Lawrence University what it is today by caring for the facilities, working in offices and teaching the world's future leaders. We have all come a long way.

In terms of diversity and inclusion the decade gave us much to celebrate. For example, our first African-American President was elected to his second term, marriage equality became the law of the land and the #MeToo Movement caused institutions to take allegations of gender based harassment and sexual assault more seriously. On campus we required all employees and new students to complete diversity training, received grants to promote inclusive pedagogy, saw significant increases in the number of faculty of color and female identifying faculty, welcomed the highest numbers of domestic students of color and international students in the history of the institution, and significantly increased diversity in the people and curriculum of our esteemed Conservatory.

However, there is one phenomenon in the last decade that for me marks a significant shortcoming related to diversity and inclusion. It was the seemingly insurmountable political divides that emerged around the 2016 presidential election that have created a culture of contempt in which we are unwilling to acknowledge the humanity of those with whom we disagree. Some would consider this a loss of ubuntu or an understanding of our interdependence. **Ubuntu is a term that originated in southern Africa and is often translated, "I am because we are". In other words our humanity is only confirmed through acknowledging (and valuing) the unique identity and humanity of others.** A key component of our university mission is the cultivation of respect for the perspectives of others. It seems that we are falling a bit short in this regard. I am not suggesting that we should all agree. Productive conflict is essential to learning and progress. However, in order to create conditions in which we can best learn from each other we must take the time to hear and understand those with whom we disagree. My greatest hope for the year (in addition to completing my memoir) is that we are able to behave differently during the 2020 political campaigns and presidential election.

So I resolve to aspire to the ideal of ubuntu in my interactions with others during this election season. I hope you will join me in this resolution. I called on each of us to practice empathy in response to the political fervor and distress of the 2016 presidential election. This year I hope we can take it a step further and practice compassion, employing both empathy and altruism, understanding and considerate action to embrace the philosophy of ubuntu. There are many ways that we can do this every day but they all require two things. These are a willingness to listen with the purpose of understanding while initially withholding judgment and an openness to share your thoughts and experiences without defensiveness. If we approach interactions with others in this way, even if we don't change our minds

about a particular point on which we differ, we come away from the encounter with a better understanding of the world and ourselves.

In addition to engaging with others with compassion in this election season, I also encourage you to inform your opinions about political issues with facts from generally non-partisan sources and to exercise your right to vote. As always, I will end my welcome with an invitation to upcoming events that will help increase our capacity for inclusion on campus. The Cultural Competency Lecture Series continues on Tuesday January 28 at 11:15 in the Esch Hurvis room of the Warch Campus with a presentation by Cecile Despres-Berry, Director of ESL and the Waseda Program, entitled, “ELF-English as a Lingua-Franca at Lawrence”. This interactive presentation will investigate unconscious conversational style biases in order to help participants become more effective communicators within our community of diverse English speakers. Once again we will also offer an Upstander Training Workshop to help participants learn strategies to safely and appropriately intervene when they witness incidents of discrimination, harassment or harmful interpersonal bias. There is no charge to participate. Both events are open to students, faculty, staff and community members. All who are interested are encouraged to attend. Please RSVP if you plan to attend these events at div-inclusion@lawrence.edu. Look for information about additional opportunities to increase your cultural competence throughout the year on our website and in the LU Insider.

Best wishes for a terrific term!

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