April 19, 2016

Dear Members of the Connecticut College Community,

I am very pleased to write with the news that John F. McKnight Jr., currently dean of intercultural development and deputy Title IX coordinator at Lafayette College, has been appointed the new dean of institutional equity and inclusion at Connecticut College. John will begin his new role on July 1.

John holds a doctorate in education, administration, and leadership studies from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, a master of science in higher education administration from Indiana University Bloomington and a bachelor of science from the University of Florida. Over the past 10 years, he has enjoyed a series of increasingly responsible administrative positions, first at Lehigh University and later, at Lafayette College, where he designed and implemented successful initiatives to foster inclusive campus communities. Of particular note are the programs in intercultural competency and in social justice peer education that he established at Lafayette, both of which have had a singular impact on the campus culture.

As dean at Lafayette since 2011, John has been responsible for managing five areas within the campus life division, including student leadership and involvement, religious and spiritual life, gender and sexuality programs, international student advising, and intercultural development. He designed and implemented an annual social justice ally development retreat for students and, as coordinator of the bias-response team, co-led the “ Civility Project,” a proactive approach to bias education. A natural collaborator, John has worked closely with faculty, staff, and students across the divisions to advance programming, advocacy for underrepresented populations, and community building. He also transformed Lafayette’s multicultural recruitment efforts in partnership with the enrollment management division, leading to positive outcomes. He was twice named the Aaron O. Hoff Administrator of the Year, and also received an Excellence in Mentorship Award at Lafayette, in recognition of these efforts.

At Connecticut College, John will be responsible for the overall vision and leadership of the work of equity and inclusion, and will collaborate with leaders across campus to fulfill our commitment to full participation. He will oversee the offices of the associate dean of equity and inclusion, religious and spiritual life, the Women’s Center, Unity House, the LGBTQ Resource Center and the Title IX coordinator. John joins us as we conclude an important year of dialogue on our campus aimed at fostering a learning environment of tolerance and mutual respect. With his extensive experience and record of success, John is uniquely qualified to lead our community forward in an important time of change.
I would like to thank Dean of the Faculty Abby Van Slyck and Dana Wright, associate professor of education, who co-chaired the search committee, and all the committee members whose thoughtful work brought about this appointment: Ken Prestininzi, associate professor of theater; Darcie Folsom, director of sexual violence prevention and advocacy; Bryana White, multicultural counseling specialist; Joey Mercado ’16; Elissa Webb ’17; Marta Martinez Fernandez ’18; and Bonnie Wells, secretary of the College. I also want to express my sincere thanks to David Canton, interim dean of institutional equity and inclusion and associate professor of history, who not only served on this committee for many months, but who has also provided critical leadership in the past months to advance the work of equity, inclusion, and full participation in the Connecticut College community.

John and his family are outdoor enthusiasts and are looking forward to exploring the hiking trails and shorelines of southeastern Connecticut. He very much looks forward to meeting you and working with you when he arrives on campus in July.

Please join me in welcoming John McKnight to Connecticut College.

Yours,

Katherine Bergeron

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