



CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

Katherine Bergeron
President

November 13, 2015

Dear Members of the Campus Community,

The ongoing struggle to make American colleges and universities more inclusive, fair, and equitable has rarely been more in the public mind than this past week. We have all been moved by events in Missouri, in California, in upstate New York, and at our neighbors in New Haven. As you reflect on the ways Connecticut College can better address our shared values of equity and inclusion, I would like to acknowledge the important efforts that are currently underway, to thank those who have been involved so far, and to ask each of you to think about what you can do to move this work forward.

Last month, we announced the appointment of B. Afeni McNeely Cobham as our new associate dean of institutional equity and inclusion. Afeni comes with more than a decade of experience in administrative and teaching roles focused on multicultural competence and racial and socioeconomic oppression. We are delighted that Dean Cobham will join us on campus in early December. By the time she arrives, we will be nearing the end of our search for a new permanent dean of institutional equity and inclusion. You received an email from the co-chairs of that search, Abby Van Slyck and Dana Wright, announcing the finalists who will be visiting campus next week. I want to thank all who have contributed to the searches so far and hope many of you will take the time to participate in the forthcoming campus visits.

These leadership roles are critically important for the future of the College, but they represent just one dimension of the work we need to do together. We know we must create even more occasions for intergroup dialogue and education about race and privilege on this campus. David Canton, our interim dean of institutional equity and inclusion, has worked with several colleagues to organize more than a dozen events, lectures, and screenings already this semester. Many more are planned for the spring. Students Organized Against Racism, the Residential Education Fellows, the diversity chair of our Student Government Association, the LGBTQ Center, and the Office of the Dean of the College have also organized excellent programs. These events have not only highlighted the need for ongoing education but also demonstrated the commitment of many students, faculty, and staff to the important work of building understanding across difference. To make lasting change, this commitment must be even more widely shared.

The faculty as a whole has shown its commitment through a new curriculum that places the concept of "full participation" at the very center: a curriculum designed to make all students thrive and flourish. To address this ideal, 47 members from five departments – nearly 25 percent of our faculty – are currently engaged in a pilot aimed at developing



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even more open and inclusive classrooms. They are conducting individual self-assessments, a review of syllabi and pedagogical approaches, and trainings that will help them understand even more deeply the extent of their responsibility. In August, moreover, the chairs of all our departments participated in a workshop aimed at reducing the occurrence of micro-aggressions on campus.

Finally, I want to report that our task force to examine and clarify protocols for dealing with incidents of bias has been meeting regularly and working deliberatively. The group expects to complete its recommendations by the end of the academic year.

As I write this to you, I am preparing to join a number of our students, faculty, staff, and administrators this weekend at a summit meeting at Bates College on “The Transformative Power of Race in the Academy.” We are going to share our insights and experiences, but more important, we are going to listen and to learn, because I believe our work in this area has only just begun. The road ahead will be long and at times difficult, but I am encouraged and optimistic, as I hope you are, by the spirit, the energy, and the good faith with which we have addressed the challenges so far. I look forward to our continued good work together.

Yours,

Katherine Bergeron