

Dear students, staff, and faculty of the School of Liberal Arts,

Most of you are aware of recent events on campus, beginning with the “town hall” meeting on diversity on Thursday, November 2. A group of students presented a document, “Through Our Eyes: The State of the Black Student at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.” The document and subsequent discussion have been reported in several media outlets and led Chancellor Bantz to organize a series of open meetings to discuss diversity issues.

As Dean, I want to note my pleasure that some Liberal Arts students have been at the forefront of this discussion. Among other things, a Liberal Arts education should link critical thinking with activism.

As you reflect on recent events, I invite you to consider our Strategic Plan, which was endorsed last year by our Student Council, our staff, and our faculty. The Plan includes the following:

**A liberal arts education is rooted in reflection, teaching and learning, scholarship, and service to people across cultures and over time. To promote a better understanding of a complex world, the School of Liberal Arts builds on this tradition and reflects it in our Core Values:**

**Student learning:** We provide an intellectual climate and curriculum that challenges students to think critically, communicate clearly and achieve in their chosen fields.

**Diversity:** Diversity encompasses the complexities of human beings and includes but is not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual preference, age, physical and mental differences, religious identification, and social class. We believe the educational environment is enhanced when diverse groups of people with diverse ideas come together to learn.

We endorsed these values and have taken steps to implement them. These steps include recent work by a team of faculty (Monroe Little, History and African American and African Diaspora Studies; Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, Anthropology and Museum Studies; Edward Curtis, Religious Studies and Millennium Scholar of the Liberal Arts; Philip Scarpino, History; and Marianne Wokeck, History and Associate Dean) that resulted in the “Enhancing Diversity Through Public Scholars” initiative, which enables us to hire three new faculty members for next year whose research, teaching, and service interests are centered on African American Studies. Also, the initiative includes funds for scholarships and student interns with a focus on African American Studies, to be implemented in 2008. Consistent with our Strategic Plan, we will actively seek additional opportunities to enhance diversity in Liberal Arts.

Without diminishing the importance of the many points raised within “Through Our Eyes,” I want to comment on two issues. First, the students ask, “Accept and respect us as Black students.” This is a reasonable request that is entirely

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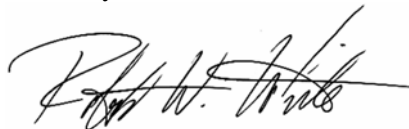
Respecting people who are different and accepting differences among people as assets are appropriate behaviors in a civil society. It also promotes the kind of learning environment that benefits all of us.

Second, the students have asked for “more Black history in the curriculum at the undergraduate level” and have called for “an undergraduate degree curriculum for African American studies.” This request has my full support. The hiring of the faculty members noted above, and hopefully the hiring of additional faculty who are also interested in African American studies, should result in more course offerings, including history courses, in the general area of African American Studies. I hope that initiatives currently underway, together with our ongoing commitment to diversity in faculty hiring and student recruitment, will lead to the critical mass necessary to sustain the development of an excellent Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies. At present, students have the option, through the Individualized Major, to work with faculty to develop a program of study that will lead to a degree in African American and/or African Diaspora Studies. Also, we offer a minor in African American and African Diaspora Studies.

I want to note some of the people available to assist students, staff, and faculty who believe they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately at IUPUI. Joshua Manlove is the IUPUI Student Advocate (278-7594); John Jones (274-4431) is the Associate Dean of Students for the campus, and Lillian Charleston is the Affirmative Action Officer (274-2306). In Liberal Arts, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Marianne Wokeck ([mwokeck@iupui.edu](mailto:mwokeck@iupui.edu); 274-8305) and Sharon Peterman ([speterma@iupui.edu](mailto:speterma@iupui.edu); 274-4953), represent faculty and staff interests on the Affirmative Action Council. Rick Ward ([reward@iupui.edu](mailto:reward@iupui.edu); 274-3976) is our Dean of Students. Finally, persons may also contact me to express their concerns ([dean@liberalarts.iupui.edu](mailto:dean@liberalarts.iupui.edu)).

In the end, we must respect the actions of our students. The events of November 2 serve as a timely reminder that we are all part of the IUPUI family. If we appreciate each other and work together, we can continue to accomplish great things, including that which we value most, student learning. We can also be proud of the manner in which our school, its students, staff and faculty have responded to the challenges raised. With few exceptions, the discussions, debates and interactions that have ensued have been civil, thoughtful, and constructive. We live in a complex world where misunderstanding is common and perhaps inevitable. However, we know that the constructive dialogue and exchange of ideas we have recently witnessed are not only consistent with the Liberal Arts tradition, but they also remain a proven means of increasing tolerance and understanding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert W. White  
Dean, IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI