



September 3, 2020

Dear Members of the University Community:

As the fall semester begins, we write to reaffirm the University of Richmond's commitment to fostering [a thriving, inclusive University community](#), actively engaged in combatting racism and discrimination in all its forms. The ongoing pandemic, which continues to disproportionately affect communities of color, and sustained national attention to issues of systemic racism, remind us that we face what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once called "the fierce urgency of now."

We know that many in our community are frustrated and feeling vulnerable, and that we can and must meet this moment and live our shared [values](#). We must commit as a community to this work, hold ourselves accountable to meeting our shared equity and inclusion goals, and act with urgency and resolve. Below we outline changes to our operations, effective immediately, that make the most of our existing resources so that we may better support our mission to prepare students "for lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership in a diverse world."

SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS

We are intent on ensuring that all students, faculty, and staff experience an authentic sense of belonging at Richmond. To that end, we have made a few important changes this academic year to better support students across the University:

Reimagining Student Services: The University will merge the offices of Common Ground and Multicultural Affairs to strengthen the reach, coordination, and impact of the programs and services offered by their talented and dedicated staff members who provide crucial support to our students. This change comes after a review of University support services for underrepresented students, first called for by the [President's Advisory Committee for Making Excellence Inclusive](#) and then by our students after the racist and xenophobic incidents on campus last January.

Dr. Tina Cade, founding director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Associate Vice President of Student Development, and member of the Institutional Coordinating Council (ICC), has agreed to lead this new office. Dr. Cade's more than 30 years of dedicated service to underrepresented students at Richmond has had a lasting impact on generations of Spiders and the University. We are deeply grateful for Tina's leadership in boldly and collaboratively imagining this new office. Throughout the fall semester, the current staff will work together and engage with students to develop a vision and plan for the office that meets the dynamic needs of our diverse student body.

Dr. Glyn Hughes, founding director of Common Ground, will continue their more than 14 years of dedicated service advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across the University as the

Director of Institutional Equity and Inclusion, working closely with Senior Administrative Officer Dr. Amy Howard.

International Education: The [Office of International Education](#) (OIE) has reconfigured its staffing structure and moved aggressively to offer additional support for our international students, responding both to January's incidents and to critical needs generated by the pandemic. The OIE staff will continue to stay in close contact with international students on campus and studying remotely from their home countries to ensure they receive the support and resources needed to navigate the semester ahead.

Disability Services: Through a Planning and Priorities Committee allocation to the University's FY 20 budget, we have established the [Office of Disability Services](#) as a separate unit and welcomed a director, Emily Helft, to lead it. This change augments our capacity and resources to support the various needs of students with disabilities on campus, in line with priorities identified by students in January.

Spider Athletics: To further support diversity, equity, and inclusion in Athletics, LaRee Sugg will step into an expanded role as Deputy Director of Athletics for Policy & Sports Programs/Chief of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion/Senior Women's Administrator. LaRee joins the ICC this fall and will represent the University on the newly formed Atlantic-10 Commission on Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion building on 19 years of good work she has led at UR.

FORTIFYING OUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH

Last year, the University piloted a [distributed leadership model](#) for inclusive excellence in which critical work and responsibilities are embedded in units across the University. This model recognizes that no single leader alone can change the culture of an institution and build an inclusive community. Rather, we must encourage engagement and leverage the expertise of all University members to foster meaningful and sustainable change.

During the pilot year of this leadership approach, we made significant progress, including:

- Through reallocation of existing University budgets, providing substantially increased funding for student cultural organizations for 2020–22;
- Opening a pilot student multicultural space;
- Encouraging more intergroup dialogue and anti-bias training across campus to combat discrimination and deepen intercultural understanding;
- Expanding an ambitious inclusive pedagogy program for our talented faculty;
- Undertaking important research into the University's history and advancing plans for memorializing a burial ground of enslaved people on campus; and
- Recognizing Juneteenth as a university holiday.

More information about our work underway [can be found here](#).

We are pleased to announce several important changes to sustain our momentum on inclusive excellence work across the University:

ICC: Dr. Patricia Herrera has agreed to extend her service as faculty ICC co-chair for an additional two years alongside Dr. Hughes. Under their strong leadership, the ICC has played an essential role in University DEI work and decision-making, including providing critical feedback

and counsel during COVID-19 contingency planning this summer. We look forward to [the ICC's](#) continued contributions, as it welcomes six new members, including two undergraduate students who will also serve ex officio on the President's Student Cabinet.

Senior Administrative Officer: The position of Senior Administrative Officer for Equity and Community will continue as a cabinet-level leadership post at the University. We are pleased that Dr. Amy Howard has agreed to serve in this role for a three-year term. The Senior Administrative Officer serves as the anchor of our distributed leadership model, working closely with University leadership, faculty, and staff to coordinate, enhance, and steward our cross-institutional work. After a successful interim year, we are pleased to announce Dr. Sylvia Gale as the Executive Director of the CCE.

BUILDING CAPACITY

We will launch several projects this year to build our institutional capacity for inclusive excellence work:

Campus Climate: The University will participate in the [Higher Education Research Institute's Campus Climate Survey](#) this year to assess the lived experiences of our students, faculty, and staff. The survey will allow the University to comprehensively analyze our campus's current challenges and strengths, and compare ourselves to other participating institutions, as we strive to improve our efforts to foster an inclusive intercultural community. The faculty survey [will launch in October](#), and the staff and student survey will be administered in the spring.

President's Student Cabinet: We are currently [soliciting nominations](#) for the inaugural class of the President's Student Cabinet, a leadership body that will be selected this fall to convey the concerns, needs, and interests of Richmond students to the University's senior leadership. This Cabinet will fill an important role in our distributed leadership model, giving students a stronger voice in institutional decisions and deliberations.

Senior Leadership: Later this month, the President's Cabinet, Academic Deans, and the ICC will meet with national higher education leader Dr. Ruth Simmons to discuss how to combat racism in higher education and meaningfully pursue this work at Richmond. Just as we are asking all of you to embrace our shared responsibility to advance inclusive excellence, we along with other University leaders must hold ourselves accountable and deepen our commitment to this work.

We also continue to draw inspiration from the initiative and creativity demonstrated by our students. On September 29 and October 1, a broad coalition of student leaders and organizations will host the first **student-led Equity Summit**, which aims to generate critical dialogues in our campus community to inspire lasting change. You can [register now](#) to take part in this important event.

ADVANCING EQUITY

The Institutional Coordinating Council rightly reminds us that — as challenging as this moment in our history is — we must seize it as “an opportunity to *advance* equity, rather than allowing it to backslide or simply remain as it is.” We are so proud of everyone in our community who has spoken out and taken action in the past days, months, and years to help ensure all Spiders can experience belonging and reach their full potential. This year, we must strive to expand the circle

of responsibility if we are to live up to our promise as an inclusive intercultural community. There is more work to do and we have every confidence that the Spider Community will seize the moment.

Sincerely,

Ronald A. Crutcher

President

David Hale

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Jeffrey Legro

Executive Vice President and Provost