

Dear UNI community, and especially our students,

Last spring semester, in the wake of the Waka Flocka Flame concert, a group of concerned students formed the Racial and Ethnic Coalition (REC). This group asked university administration to live up to the ideals of our vision, mission, and strategic plan, and requested that the administration accomplish several tasks.

These requests related to a few important items: clarifying leadership roles (including the membership and responsibilities of Senior Leadership Team, as well as the role of the Climate Response team and the bias reporting structure), providing support for multicultural organization events, and developing informative language about multicultural organization offerings for current and prospective students.

Their very reasonable requests were not fully accomplished by the time members of leadership met with the group again in September, a reflection that we did not prioritize them nor our commitment of becoming a “diverse and inclusive campus community.”

Subsequently, Northern Iowa Student Government (NISG) passed a resolution condemning Senior Leadership for our inaction (the resolution can be found [here](#)). I want to personally apologize for this, for the message this situation sent to our campus, and for the frustration and distrust felt by these students.

We are in a place today that is very similar to where we were four years ago, 10 years ago, and even 50 years ago. While we have made some progress, we have focused too often on managing expectations and making changes on the margins.

Our focus must be to move forward with dedication and measurable action by identifying and making *systemic* change in our university’s culture in order to support all members of our community equitably and justly. As a first step, I am forming the President’s Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Advisory Committee. This committee of faculty, staff, and students will work to ensure that diversity, inclusion, and equity are central priorities in all our endeavors. The first action of this committee will be to work with stakeholders on campus and in our community to create a Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Action Plan. This Action Plan will guide our work, and will provide a clear set of priorities to create the needed systemic change to our culture.

Work on diversity, inclusion and equity is difficult, but it is essential to building a campus community that is welcoming and supportive of all our students and employees. We have and will fall short of our ideals from time to time, but we must listen carefully and seek to understand. At these times, and those ahead, we must acknowledge our shortcomings and recommit to this vital work. Together we will build a university that better serves all students.

We thank the dedicated students on our campus who continue to remind us of our ideals, especially when we fail to achieve our vision. We look forward to authentic conversation across our campus and in the Advisory Committee. We can and will do better, and I am recommitting to moving us forward together in this important work.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Nook
President