



Fairleigh Dickinson University

One in a series of communications from the President

President's Note — Newly Charged DEIA Council — April 22, 2022

Dear Members of the University Community,

FDU's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Advisory Council has had a tremendous impact in its short time in existence. The council, chaired by Dale Caldwell, Executive Director of the Rothman Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, has provided input and recommendations on a wide variety of DEI-related issues, and its actions and opinions have influenced the University's actions and planning process. In fact, many of the council's recommendations have either been implemented or will be incorporated into our next strategic plan. The council also drafted the University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commitment Statement, which can be found on our [website](#) alongside our mission statement. We are deeply grateful to Dale and all the council members for their efforts and insights, and we appreciate all that they have done to help FDU make important progress in this area.

As announced previously, several council members also were instrumental in helping the University receive a \$1.4 million grant that allocates funding for student support and success, as well as efforts to provide a more inclusive learning environment. Relating to that grant, I am pleased to announce that with the help of council members and through the leadership of our external DEI consultant, Dr. Alta Mauro, Associate Dean for Inclusion & Belonging at Harvard College, the University will soon conduct campus climate surveys that will assess attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and experiences of our students, faculty, and staff. The surveys will be shared with community members via email and will provide valuable information that will help us determine future steps. We ask that you please take the time to respond thoughtfully. It is very important that we hear your voice.

Through the grant, the University also will conduct diversity and inclusion workshops. Again, look for more information in the months ahead. We appreciate your participation in these very critical efforts, which will lay a strong foundation for more activities to come.

Now that these initial steps are under way and considering the many changes that have taken place at FDU recently — particularly in several key leadership positions — we thought it best to update the charge and the membership of our DEI Council, as we know that its role and work will only continue to grow in importance during the years ahead.

First, I am very pleased to announce that Dale Caldwell will continue to chair the council. As many of you know, Dale has a personal connection to these issues — his father was prominent in the civil rights movement — and he has done a tremendous job at the helm of the council. We are fortunate to be able to continue to count on his leadership.

Second, the charge of the council will go beyond the initial reason for its establishment, which was primarily to continue the dialogue that had emerged in 2020, analyze our strengths and weaknesses, and provide short-term and long-term recommendations. The advisory council's scope now will be broadened to focus on all those efforts that will help create an environment across the University where the members of its community feel a sense of belonging. Through its guidance, planning, and analysis, the council will help to ensure the University is fulfilling its commitment to creating and nurturing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus environment and to building a community that promotes and celebrates a culture of diversity, accessibility, and inclusion, as well as mutual respect and understanding among students, faculty, staff, administration, and alumni.

The updated version of the council will be comprised of two sub-committees: Academic Affairs, chaired by University Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Avaltroni, and Student and Community Life, chaired by Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Uchenna Baker. Each of the committees will be asked to focus on four key areas including: campus culture and belonging, educational programming, engagement and retention, and building diversity pipelines. The membership will include representatives from throughout the University, including current members of the council as well as new members to be added.

Finally and of special importance, the council will be renamed the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Advisory Council to reflect the

additional emphasis on making our campuses not only more inclusive but more accessible as well.

The newly charged and constituted DEIA Advisory Council will play a prominent role in the future progress we forge on these critically important issues; but make no mistake, this is not the responsibility of one group alone. We will only become the model we strive toward if everyone at the University joins together, embraces the importance of this effort, and takes responsibility for cultivating a community where mutual respect and understanding are prevalent and where all are welcomed and appreciated for who they are. While I know we all have something to learn and steps to take, I also know that our community is a special one and is committed to making this vision real. Together we will do exactly that.

Yours in FDU,

Christopher A. Capuano, Ph.D.
President