

7/15/2021

Colleagues,

You will find as we get to know one another that I love to read. I particularly enjoy reading authors like Brené Brown, who encourages us to embrace vulnerability on a path to leadership courage:

“Courage is contagious. To scale daring leadership and build courage in teams and organizations, we have to cultivate a culture in which brave work, tough conversations and whole hearts are the expectations, and armor is not necessary or rewarded.”

I shared this passage during my first Cabinet meeting earlier this week. As we become more daring, we must acknowledge that somehow, erroneously and unconsciously, we believe that each of us must think and behave alike, that we must come from similar backgrounds and perspectives to work as a team. But we know that homogeneous cultures and experiences can create biases that foster echo chambers, tolerate discrimination, and promote a “fitting-in” culture. All of this robs an institution of diverse ideas, perspectives and individuals. It’s almost as if you say to your workforce, “I want your ideas, but they must fit in this bucket.”

With this in mind, I have expanded the Chancellor’s Cabinet to include a number of new members, whose perspectives and backgrounds, I believe, will enhance what our daring leadership team is able to accomplish as we encounter both challenges and opportunities. Joining the Cabinet are:

- Dean Tanya Boone
- Dean John Barnett
- Dean Jeannie Chapman
- Dean Mohamed “Mo” Djerdjouri
- Dean Shirleatha Lee
- Dean Laura Reynolds
- Associate Vice Chancellor Vintress Brown
- Associate Vice Chancellor Benita Hopkins
- Faculty Senate President Lisa Johnson

Additionally, we will re-establish a Staff Council to help ensure that the leadership team has an opportunity to consider the voices and perspectives of our dedicated staff. We have yet to determine who will lead this group, but its leader will join the Cabinet as well.

I am committed to communicating with you frequently and in as many ways as possible. To that end, we will announce a schedule of quarterly Faculty and Staff Town Halls, during which the leadership team will report out on topics such as budgets, academic programming and pandemic protocols. We will host similar events for students,

addressing the topics most relevant to their experiences on campus.

As I wrap up my second week as Chancellor, I am invigorated, inspired and grateful to have this opportunity to be daring with you. Think big! UP is where we want to go!

Warm regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bennie L. Harris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Dr. Bennie L. Harris
Chancellor

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***Up* is where we live.**