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A message from the Associate Dean for Diversity and Community Engagement

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Diversity and Inclusion at SKMC Fall 2017

A message from the Associate Dean for Diversity and Community Engagement

by Dr. Bernard Lopez



Diversity: the richness in human differences. Why is diversity important? A wide variety of experiences and points of view mean that we get to look at issues from all angles rather than just one. Inclusion: the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity. Why is inclusion important? It is not enough to have diversity - inclusion means that we value and cherish the wide variety of experiences and viewpoints. Creating and enhancing this environment is important as we set the stage to provide service to our most important customer - our patients.

Since September 2013 when I was appointed as the Associate Dean for Diversity and Community Engagement, SKMC has greatly expanded our efforts in D & I. A wide range of activities have greatly enhanced the environment in which we educate our learners and care for our patients. SKMC has expanded its D & I successes.

In January 2017, I was appointed Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion for Thomas Jefferson University and added on (in addition to my duties in

SKMC) responsibility for enhancing and expanding D & I in the colleges of Biomedical Sciences, Health Professions, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Population Health. In July 2017, with the formal merger with Philadelphia University, Thomas Jefferson East Falls Campus is now included in our efforts. We have the opportunity to maximize diversity, inclusion and cultural sensitivity education in each individual college and campus. More importantly, with everyone working together, we have the opportunity to create, as Steve Spinelli, the Chancellor of Thomas Jefferson University will say, an "ecosystem" for D & I. With our unique university, we have a great opportunity to create a unique collaboration and be leaders in D & I. This is well underway - the TJU D & I Academic Action Council, with representatives from across the academic portion of the enterprise, began its work in March 2017 of analyzing the current state of affairs, developing the vision, and making specific recommendations to "move the needle" at Jefferson. It is a great opportunity to expand diversity not only for SKMC but for all of TJU.

Our journey has only just begun. While we have accomplished much in the past four years, we have much more work as we strive to be the most inclusive organization possible. It is important for our environment - a friendly and inclusive environment allows us to reach our education and work potential. Most importantly, an inclusive environment gives us the best chance to serve our most important customer - our patients - and to achieve the mission of TJU: "We improve lives".

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