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Staff Report

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## UM Announces Plan for Leadership on Issues of Race and Diversity

**Chancellor releases report on campus environment, creates new position of vice chancellor for diversity**

AUGUST 1, 2014 BY STAFF REPORT



OXFORD, Miss. – University of Mississippi Chancellor Dan Jones has released a comprehensive action plan for fostering a more inclusive and welcoming environment on campus.

The recommendations are the fruit of a study of wide-ranging opinions on campus culture from students, faculty and administrators, which were paired with input from respected consultants. The plan includes a new position of vice chancellor for diversity and a variety of initiatives focused on inclusion and race relations.

Last summer, an expanded Sensitivity and Respect Committee completed its review of the university's environment on race and diversity. After the committee's report, consultants Ed Ayers and Christy Coleman of Richmond, Virginia, were brought in to study the effect on campus culture of building names and campus symbols tied to historical issues of slavery and segregation. Consultant Greg Vincent, who led the University of Texas in addressing issues of diversity and inclusion, was hired to analyze the university's organizational structure and how it relates to diversity and inclusion.

The consultants submitted reports on their interviews with members of the campus community, as well as recommendations based on their experiences with similar issues. Jones complimented the work of the university community and consultants in generating the ideas included in the action plan.

"The reports from everyone involved were candid and thoughtful in suggesting that more can be done here to improve our environment for diversity and inclusion," Jones said.

"It is my hope that the steps outlined here – reflecting the hard work of university committees and our consultants – will prove valuable in making us a stronger and healthier university, bringing us closer to our goal of being a warm and welcoming place for every person every day, regardless of race, religious preference, country of origin, ability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or gender expression."

Jones said he knows that some people will find parts of the recommendations that they like and some they don't. "Every idea was not included, but I'm confident everyone involved will find evidence of their substantial contributions.

"There were and will continue to be differences of opinion among us. But, I am encouraged that while our discussions over recent months were frank, even tough, they also were civil and respectful. My very sincere thanks go out to all of those who demonstrated these values throughout the process."

The process was designed to gather as broad a range of opinion as possible, the chancellor said.

"It was important that we hear from everyone who loves this university," he said. "Too often when viewpoints are wide-ranging, nuanced and emotional, the easy answer for leaders is a non-decision, freezing people at a point in time and putting progress off to another day. To me, that is not leadership. And our mission as a university is to lead."

The plan involves six steps, with more initiatives expected when the new vice chancellor position is filled:

- 1. Create a vice chancellor-level position for diversity and inclusion.** UM's provost will create a specific position title, portfolio, set of responsibilities and initial budget for a new administrative position. The job will be created after consultation with faculty and will be subject to approval by the university's governing board. A search committee will be formed to begin work during the fall semester.
- 2. Establish a portfolio model of diversity and engagement.** As part of the creation of the job description for the new vice chancellor position, a set of standards for diversity and engagement will be drafted for the university to follow moving forward.
- 3. Deal squarely with the issue of race while also addressing other dimensions of diversity.**

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OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

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U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

"We look forward to a day when it is the norm to embrace and celebrate our differences, when our country and state have become a truly post-racial society," Jones said. "But that day has not yet arrived. Clearly, there are still issues regarding race that our country must address. And we will need to continue a dialogue on race at our university. Our unique history regarding race provides not only a larger responsibility for providing leadership on race issues, but also a large opportunity – one we should and will embrace."

A faculty group focused on UM's history with slavery began work last year. The initiative is an example of the kind of scholarly leadership UM can provide on the issue, Jones said, voicing renewed commitment to the work of the university's William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation. He also said the new vice chancellor for diversity will be engaged in efforts to address issues of race and diversity and will work with existing campus organizations, such as the Critical Race Studies Group, that have focused on these issues.

#### **4. Implement a symbolic and formal dedication of all new students to the ideals of inclusion and fairness to which UM is devoted.**

The UM Creed was adopted as a means of communicating and cultivating the university's core values. A public university can't require a pledge or oath as a condition of enrollment. It can and will work with students and others to pursue methods of elevating and strengthening the UM community with the creed's values. The university's vice chancellor for student affairs will implement this recommendation.

#### **5. Offer more history, putting the past into context, telling more of the story of Mississippi's struggles with slavery, secession, segregation and their aftermath.**

Consultants cited Richmond, one of capitals of the Confederacy, as a good example of appropriately addressing a negative history. City leaders opted not to erase history, even some of the more difficult parts of it, and chose not to remove existing statues and building names. Instead, the city has balanced its presentation of history by offering broader, contemporary context for symbols and adding new symbols more representative of the city's current culture.

An example of that approach already implemented at UM is the statue honoring James Meredith, the university's first African-American student. Additional opportunities with more contemporary symbols lie ahead, and the new vice chancellor will be engaged in long-term evaluation of those recommendations. Until the new vice chancellor is hired, that job will be handled by the provost and the assistant to the chancellor for multicultural affairs.

Among buildings and symbols that will be evaluated for plaques adding context and perspective are Vardaman Hall, the ballroom in Johnson Commons and the Confederate statue at the entrance to Lyceum Circle.

Several steps have been taken already:

– The entrance of the Manning Center was recently designated the Williams-Reed Foyer in honor of Ben Williams and James Reed, the university's first two black football players. Jones thanked Athletics Director Ross Bjork and head football coach Hugh Freeze for their leadership in the recommendation.

– The new Center for Inclusion and Cross Cultural Engagement opens this fall in Stewart Hall. The center, which will move later to the renovated and expanded Student Union, enhances the quantity and quality of programming and leadership initiatives for underrepresented students.

– Coliseum Drive will need a new name when the Tad Smith Coliseum is replaced with the new basketball arena. A recommendation from the UM Alumni Association and the M-Club to rename it "Roy Lee 'Chucky' Mullins Drive" has been adopted. Mullins, a black football player who was paralyzed and later died, became a unifying symbol of an indomitable human spirit at the university.

– Confederate Drive, which enters Fraternity Row, will be renamed "Chapel Lane."

**6. Appropriate use of the name "Ole Miss."** UM's longstanding nickname is beloved by the vast majority of its students and alumni. But a few, especially some university faculty, are uncomfortable with it. Some don't want it used at all and some simply don't want it used within the academic context.

The university completed a national study about the name "Ole Miss" during the last year and found the vast majority of respondents don't attach any meaning to it other than an affectionate name for the university. In fact, a significant margin likes and prefers the "Ole Miss" name. And a very small percentage of respondents associate the university, either as "Ole Miss" or "University of Mississippi," with negative race issues.

Both names will be used in appropriate contexts going forward, with particular emphasis going to "Ole Miss" in athletics and as a representation of the university's spirit.

#### **Other campus efforts already in place will continue to grow**

The action plan includes a wide variety of other initiatives launched even as the study of campus

environment was underway, including creation of the Bias Incident Response Team, diversity training for employees, construction of a National Pan-Hellenic Council garden representing the history and campus engagement of historically black fraternities and sororities, periodic surveys to monitor the campus environment, and various programs to enhance student success.

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