

To: Members of the Working Group (WG) on Diversity, Inclusion, and the Learning Environment

Cc: Dean Wildermuth

From: Professor David Harris, Chair

Re: Update on Pending Matters from June 21 Meeting, and Request for Input by July 16

Dear WG Members:

This email conveys information about several matters worked on since our meeting on June 21, attaching final versions, and also asks for your input on several issues on which we'd like to send advice and recommendations to Dean Wildermuth.

First, after extensive consultation with both Dean Wildermuth and former Dean Carter, and with WG member Jamey, we've arrived at a final version of the credo that we worked on both in our meetings and off line. It is attached. Recall that the credo is designed and intended for use primarily at the upcoming orientation, to give our new 1 L students a way to understand what we expect of them in our community. The credo should not be understood as an official statement of the faculty, and it is not a public mission statement for the Law School; planning for the larger strategic process on these issues, including discussion of a permanent credo or set of principles, will soon begin, and that process may yield decisions that keep the credo, modify it, or use something else entirely.

Second, recall that we considered and endorsed Dean Wildermuth's three requests for immediate direction on three matters. With input from Dean Wildermuth and former Dean Carter on those, they're now in shape. I attach those as well.

Last, at least for now, I'd like to get any input and feedback you might have on possible materials and resources the WG will recommend for consideration by Dean Wildermuth and others, for the orientation and going forward for the whole law school community, on the subjects of training on inclusion and bias, and the topic of how the community can learn to handle conversation on difficult issues. Please take a look at these suggestions, and send any feedback you have, directly to me at daharris@pitt.edu, by close of business next Monday, July 16. Also, if you have your own suggestions on these topics, please forward those to me, too. The idea is to gather good sources of training material, potential trainers and speakers, etc. Even a brief reaction would be helpful if you have one: "These look great," "I like A, but not B" etc.

For training on implicit bias and related issues:

Dr. Arin Reeves – Nextions Research: Dr. Reeves has spoken at Pitt on related topics before, and she's also the primary (only?) author of a study I use when training lawyers about implicit bias, "Written in Black and White..." about bias in law firm evaluation of writing samples, with race as the deciding factor (see the research page).

Nextions:

<https://nextions.com/>

Dr. Reeves:

<https://nextions.com/our-team/>

The Perception Institute: I met Rachel Godsil of Perception Institute once, during one of the NAACP LDF's Marshall Institutes, where we both presented. I found her quite impressive, and though her I got to know and respect the Institute's work. Rachel is the Institute's Director of Research, and is also on the law faculty at Rutgers. The Perception Institute most recently co-created the implicit bias training for all Starbucks employees nationwide. Given the type of presentations and work they do, and the types of institutions for which they've done it, they look well suited to helping us (IMHO).

The Perception Institute:

<https://perception.org/>

The research is broad, impressive, and shows deep experience with educational environments.

On the subject of conducting conversations on difficult issues:

“Critical Conversations,” Boston University School of Law: This effort, part of the efforts of the Dean of the School of Law and the Associate Director for Diversity and Inclusion, has been noticed in the wider community of law schools. I found it difficult to get a lot of information on it, but I pulled this from the School of Law's web site. I am sure we can get more information if we are interested:

Critical Conversations

A yearlong series of events that provides students, faculty, and staff the unique opportunity to discuss issues of diversity and its intersections with the law. The program begins during Orientation with a mandatory session for all incoming students. Optional sessions throughout the year discuss topics such as Privilege, Faith and the Law; and Ableism – Perspectives from the Deaf Community. Although not part of the law school's curriculum, the sessions have a high student turnout and are deeply valued by the community.

Here's a blog post from a dean at another law school about BU's program:

<https://www.whatgreatlawsschoolsdo.com/2018/04/boston-universitys-critical-conversations/>

Please send me your reactions to these and any other similar initiatives that we might consider recommending to those putting orientation together, and to Dean Wildermuth for her efforts going forward. Let me hear from you by July 16, COB. Thanks to all of you for your service.