

Subject: [faculty] "Moving Forward: Old Centre Conversations, May 2-4, 2018"

Date: Monday, May 14, 2018 at 2:28:26 PM Eastern Daylight Time

From: John A. Roush <john.roush@centre.edu> (sent by faculty-request@lists.centre.edu <faculty-request@lists.centre.edu>)

To: students@lists.centre.edu <students@lists.centre.edu>, 'faculty@lists.centre.edu' <faculty@lists.centre.edu>, 'staff@lists.centre.edu' <staff@lists.centre.edu>

Dear Members of the Centre College Community:

What I have done below is to identify the plan, "Moving Forward: Old Centre Conversations, May 2-4, 2018," resulting from the conversations that occurred in Old Centre on May 2-4. These discussions, focused on matters of diversity and inclusion, are important and timely not just on Centre's campus, but also across our nation. And, we should take some satisfaction that our discussions were conducted in a peaceful, orderly way – intended to make Centre a better and stronger place for all the students who choose to join our College community.

As a premier, undergraduate college, Centre over the past two decades has become an increasingly diverse institution in all ways one might measure. While we claim this increased diversity as a powerfully good thing, these changes require that we think carefully about the needs and expectations of the students, faculty, and staff who now come our way.

During our May 2-4 conversations, a number of the matters discussed have been in place or are in process, but there were others that need attention. These would include being more intentional about matters of diversity among our student population, in particular, working to study and better understand some of the public safety concerns affecting our students, continuing to move forward with plans for more education and training; communicating more clearly our efforts for recruitment that seek to make sure we have as wide a pipeline of talent as is possible; and moving ahead on some improvements at the dining commons. The College is clear about moving forward to accomplish this summer and beyond these commitments and others that might surface as we work together to improve Centre.

The plan for moving forward shared below is broader, somewhat more directional than what was discussed in our Old Centre Conversations. I believe this adjustment – one that will make diversity and inclusion and other related matters central to our campus culture as well as a more systematic part of our College's operation – is a significant and more meaningful response to some of what was discussed during our time together in May. I trust our students, in particular, will agree.

First, and as a result of a most constructive conversation with Board Chair Mark Nunnally and Board Vice Chair Jim Seabury a decision was made to call a special meeting of the Board to discuss the larger, more strategic issues associated with diversity and inclusion. The plan will be for the Trustees to come together during the summer months to discuss issues that might include but not be limited to related budget matters, education and training, transparency and reporting, student safety, dining and residential life, etc. Along with attending to other College business that is timely.

Second, to establish a Work Plan that rises directly from the Old Centre Conversations. Details regarding this Work Plan are still in process, and some number of them will be discussed, no doubt, with the Trustees at their summer session. This report, being prepared by Jamey Leahey, will be available to a wider audience when it is complete. The focus here is to be certain that the College, in fact, can "deliver" on the points identified and to be sure that the actions recommended will bring about the desired results. I will be working with Jamey Leahey, Rodmon King, Randy Hays, and Andrea Abrams to identify a representative group of students who can assist us with this important work, as well as be involved in some of the communication related to this effort.

Third, I am of the opinion that Centre needs to be more intentional about other conversations that should occur

on our campus going forward. We have a time-honored tradition for campus-wide events, often including guests, that afford us the opportunity to think about diversity, inclusion, freedom of speech, gratitude, social justice, moral and ethical leadership, compassion, etc. This is a topical area where I believe our trustees will take interest and be able to contribute, and this conversation will begin this summer and carry into this next year. This third idea, continuing our tradition of “important conversations,” is one I intend to advance. My vision here is for an “intellectual highway,” if you will – one that is wide and invites each of us to learn and grow and, thereby, be able to live our lives more fully at Centre and be prepared better for the lives of work and service that await. To me, that sounds like Centre!

At this College, each student is welcomed by Susie and me as a valued member of our campus family. We remind ourselves and others that the opportunities and successes we experience here are, in great measure, a reflection of the generosity of others – giving us reason to be grateful. Our campus culture is built around kindness, hard work, an open door, a “family table,” and honest communication, and we should use this occasion to embrace those values, too.

As has always been the case, I am available to anyone by message or phone call or in-person.

My best,

John

*John Roush, President
Centre College
5/14/2018*