Andrea Abrams Remarks

In my twelve years at Centre, I have come to appreciate the meaningful work that has been accomplished by students, staff, faculty, and administration to make this a site of learning and service where not only are all welcome, but all belong. That no matter your race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, class, religion, ability, neurodiversity, national origin, citizenship status, or political belief—you are a member of the Centre Family. In those twelve years, I have also come to know the hurt, alienation, and lack of thriving that persists because not all barriers to inclusion, support and empowerment have been removed. There is always more work to be done.

When I made the shift from faculty to chief diversity officer, there were many reasons. Among them: I believed that my background in teaching about race, gender, social justice and cultural diversity could lend itself well to fostering a more diverse and inclusive community at Centre College. In addition, I knew that my efforts would be supported by the administration, particularly President John Roush, interim Dean Brian Cusato, and then Dean Ellen Goldey. Diversity and inclusion work cannot only be labored on in the trenches by students, faculty and staff—the administration also has some heavy lifting to make the necessary fundamental changes.

Therefore, when I learned that I would be a member of the search committee for the new president of the college, it was important to me that the next president should not only be a person of integrity, bold vision, and compassionate leadership but that this person should also have a deep and demonstrated dedication to the work of diversity and inclusion.
During the interview process, we asked many questions about diversity and, of course, candidates were prepared to answer that this was vital work and that they would support those efforts. But a smaller number of candidates were able to speak cogently about the uphill battles against deeply entrenched privilege and tradition or navigating the turbulence and promise of truly including different perspectives and ways of doing—Dr. Moreland was one of those candidates. Even fewer candidates could point to concrete things that they had accomplished at their previous institutions to recruit and retain a more diverse student body, faculty and staff—Dr. Moreland was one of those candidates.

Of course, I listened carefully to his responses on other issues—even on things not related to diversity. I heard his thoughts on the future of the liberal arts, relationship building within a college community, and stewardship of a two-hundred-year-old institution. Over the course of the interviews and dinners, I came to believe that Dr. Moreland is a caring leader who will minister to all in his flock and that he possesses the strength to enact his bold visions for the liberal arts.

I cast my vote for Dr. Moreland because I believe that he will not only have my back as the chief diversity officer but that he will have the back of Centre College. And it is based on that belief that I welcome you, Dr. Moreland, to the Centre College Family.