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Inclusive Excellence for the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Louisville

I am a first-generation college graduate. Girls in my family just 2 generations before me were removed from school after 6th grade to tend the home. I grew up as the daughter of a factory worker and a maid. To pay for college, I took loans and held a work-study job for 20 hours every week, plus 50-60 hours per week every summer. I never once visited my university's career center because in my blue-collar hometown, I didn't know anyone who had a 'career' – only jobs. If the label "first-gen" existed in the 1980s, I was oblivious. I had no social capital about how to navigate college, and I wouldn't come to learn the meaning, nor power, of 'social capital' until many years later. In grad school, I was the first woman to join a specific research group. My mentor isolated me in an old lab with broken equipment that I needed to repair. Meanwhile, my two male peers who joined the group at the same time were heavily mentored by the PI and senior research staff. It took me awhile to recognize and admit to myself that I was experiencing discrimination and isolation simply for being a woman in chemistry. Looking back, these experiences motivated me to openly share my journey so that I could connect with, encourage, and support students (and colleagues, too) on their own journeys.

Promoting equitable outcomes for all campus community members means that equity must be the work of everyone – both individually and collectively. I am cognizant of my social and economic privilege as a white, heterosexual, cis-gendered woman. One framework I find particularly meaningful in guiding my continued personal growth is the Shared Equity Leadership (SEL) model; it identifies both core values and the practices necessary to deliver on those values through action. I've sought opportunities to continue developing my skills. I completed the Hate/Uncycled Anti-Bias training provided by the Anti-Defamation League with the members of the Chancellor's Executive Leadership Council at the University of Illinois. We then sponsored leadership teams in the divisions to do the same. I've completed Miami University's DEI Certificate in which we examined our biases, stereotypes, and microaggressions; race and anti-racism; intercultural communication; and important issues such as ageism, ableism, and healthcare inequities. Miami urged us to realize the importance of translating DEI principles into action. For example, when I was directing Miami's academic program prioritization process, I framed discussions and analyses around workload policies to create support for Deans and Department Chairs to resolve teaching and service inequities within faculty workload assignments.

While I was an ACE Fellow at the University of Illinois, Chancellor Robert Jones offered priceless mentoring about honoring the mission of a research university to meaningfully engage with the racially and ethnically diverse cities from which the institution draws its

very name. The university should not dictate priorities. Rather, the staff and faculty should offer expertise in service of the challenges identified by community partners. For example, the Chancellor's Call to Action to Address Racism and Social Injustice Research Program annually funds critical research on systemic racial inequities. Community organizations are the principal investigators. They identify their most pressing problems and invite university partners to drive forward research that will be beneficial to their organization regarding social justice, criminal justice reform, or disparities in health/health care.

Change and advocacy should not fall by default to only those who are harmed by these systems. Yet, a staggering number of systems and processes in higher education still conflate sex with gender and treat both as binary. As the mother of a nonbinary, neurodivergent person, I've seen them endure the stress of continually coming out because these systems do not recognize their identity. I eagerly sought SafeZone training to foster and affirm supportive environments in my university and my community for people of all gender identities and expressions. I also lead the change for more inclusive language to support the full spectrum of gender identities and historically marginalized peoples in policy briefs created by the American Chemical Society for the members and staff of the U.S. Congress. Shared equity leadership is vital to transforming our communities.

As your Dean, I would prioritize resources through strategic use of the budget to increase the diversity of students, staff, and faculty. I would partner with shared governance to change processes and conditions that perpetuate the status quo around recruitment, retention, and leadership development. We would ensure that our governance policies recognize and reward the disproportionate service given by faculty of color, LGBTQ+ faculty, and women faculty to support the marginalized students on our campuses. I am passionate about building diverse teams and communities who value equitable outcomes. I would support their development of skills to champion inclusive excellence. Only by challenging biased attitudes and behaviors in ourselves, and then supporting others to do the same, can we hope to build DEI capacity throughout the institution that will translate into inclusive excellence in our classrooms and campus communities.

The Boyer 2030 Commission champions the "equity/excellence imperative – a belief that excellence and equity are inextricably entwined... that excellence without equity (privilege reproducing privilege) is not true excellence, and equity (mere access) without excellence is unfulfilled promise." This imperative resonates deeply with me. Colleges and universities have a moral responsibility to create vibrant, inclusive communities dedicated to excellence for all of our students, staff, and faculty. We must create venues, events, and communities to learn about, celebrate, and value one another's unique experiences and identities. We must deconstruct processes and systems that do harm. As the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Louisville, I would champion the values and practices of the shared equity leadership model to create a community that honors inclusive excellence.