




**TO:** LSU Law Community

**FROM:** Jack M. Weiss   
Chancellor

**DATE:** October 23, 2014

**RE:** Appointment of Diversity Task Force

I am today appointing a broadly based task force including students, Law Center faculty and staff, and graduates of the Law Center to address the concerns expressed in Mr. Alagood's letter of October 20, 2014 and seconded by Mr. Hairston. The charge of the task force will be to consider and make recommendations to the faculty and the Administration of the Law Center on means by which the Law Center can "help [all students, including] minority students succeed, foster camaraderie among all students, and promote better understanding of one another's cultures and experiences," to quote from Mr. Hairston's recent e mail to me.

The task force will be chaired by Darrel J. Papillion (LSU Law '94), founding partner of Walters, Papillion, Thomas, Cullens, LLC. Mr. Papillion is the current President of the Baton Rouge Bar Association and a longtime adjunct professor at the Law Center. Other members of the task force (in alphabetical order, with current faculty standing committee appointments indicated) will be:

- Kenneth Barnes, '15, President, LSU Student Bar Association
- Molly Brannon, '15, President, LSU Legal Association of Women
- Professor John M. Church (Chair, Faculty Appointments; Chair, Apprenticeship Week; Promotion & Tenure (elected); International Student Programs)
- Andrew Hairston, '16, President, LSU Black Law Students Association
- LSU Law Director of Admissions Jake Henry
- Ashley Jackson, '15, President, LSU Outlaw
- Hon. Bonnie F. Jackson, '78, Judge, 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court
- Professor Robert E. Lancaster (Chair, Clinical Legal Education; Faculty Appointments)
- Professor Christina M. Sautter (Chair, Student Educational Policies; Legal Writing and Academic Success)
- Professor Margaret S. Thomas (Admissions; Faculty Appointments)
- Professor Christopher J. Tyson (Faculty Appointments; Legal Writing and Academic Success)
- Monica Vela-Vick, (U. Michigan Law '07; associate, Walters, Papillion)
- LSU Law Librarian Beth Williams (Legal Writing and Academic Success; Faculty Scholarship; Law Review & Energy Law Journal)

I anticipate that the task force will begin its work shortly and that it will provide its report and recommendations early in 2015.

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It is important that the work of the new task force be viewed in its proper context. The faculty and Administration of the Law Center are strongly committed to diversity in all its many aspects. In recent years, the Law Center has made enormous progress toward fostering a truly diverse community.

In particular, since 2007, the diversity of the Law Center student body has increased dramatically. In fall 2007, approximately 4% of our students were African-American students; by 2014, that number had tripled, to 12%. Students of color, who constituted 13% of the student body in 2007, now constitute 21% of the current student body. Whereas as recently as 2007 both of these enrollments at LSU Law substantially trailed that of Louisiana's two non-historically black law schools, Tulane and Loyola, by 2013—the most recent year for which comparative data is available-- on a percentage basis, African-American enrollment at LSU Law substantially exceeded that of each of the other two schools. In 2013, overall percentage enrollment of students of color at the Law Center was about equal to that of Loyola Law and greater than that of Tulane Law.

Likewise, when compared to law schools at other Southeastern Conference universities, African-American enrollment at LSU Law went from less than half the average of our SEC peers as recently as 2009 to several percentage points above that average in 2013 (15% vs. 12%). Our enrollment of all students of color showed the same substantial upward trend vis a vis our SEC peers, from 13% (5% lower than the SEC average) in 2009 to 23% in 2013 (two percentage points above the SEC average of 21%).

During roughly the same time span, the Law Center has substantially increased the diversity of our faculty. Since 2007, the Law Center has hired twelve tenured or tenure-track faculty members. Of these, two are African-American and four are women. Two of these women were recently awarded tenure and promoted to full Professor of Law. The other two women have both been promoted to Associate Professor of Law. In 2002-03, out of a tenured/tenure-track faculty of 36, only 4 were women (11%) and 2 were minorities (6%). In 2009-10, out of a tenured/tenure-track faculty of 35, the number of women had increased to 7 (20%) and the number of minority professors remained at 2. Today, the Law Center employs 36 tenured and tenure-track faculty members; 8 (22%) are women and 4 are minorities (11%).

These figures do not take account of the women and minority members of our non-tenure track faculty and staff. They also do not reflect the offers we have extended to women and minority faculty candidates that have not been accepted. No doubt, as the Law Center faculty and Administration are well aware, increasing the diversity of our faculty remains an important goal. Given our financial constraints and the competitive marketplace for talented minority law teachers, it is a goal that can be reached only incrementally and over time. There is much further

progress to be made in diversity faculty hiring and the faculty is engaged actively in interviewing a number of such candidates at this time.

In addition to the Law Center's successes in increasing the numerical diversity of its students and faculty, it is important to recall the many other recent milestones we have witnessed in realizing our shared dream of a truly inclusive law school community. In 2009, the late Judge Ralph E. Tyson was recognized as the Law Center's Distinguished Alumnus and a conference room named for him to commemorate his many contributions to the community and to the law. Judge Bonnie Jackson was similarly honored in 2012. In 2013, Chief Justice Bernette Johnson was recognized as the Law Center's honorary Order of the Coif inductee and Commencement speaker. In 2012, Chief Judge Brian Jackson was our Coif inductee, as was Judge Ernestine Gray in 2008 and Judge Tyson in 2011. In 2009, the Law Center hired an African-American woman in the vital role of Director of Admissions. She was succeeded in 2010 by our current Director, Jake Henry, also an African-American. And, most encouragingly, African-American and other students of color have been elected by their fellow students in recent years to such leadership positions as Student Bar President, Chair of the Law Center Ethics Committee, multiple class presidencies, Moot Court and Trial Advocacy board, and editor-in-chief of the Journal of Energy Law and Resources. (In fact, this year, 3 of the 4 executive officers of the SBA are African-American students.) Students of color routinely serve as Law Center Ambassadors assisting us with the recruitment of admitted students.

The road to a genuinely diverse community is long and winding—indeed, the journey is one that will never be truly complete. I am confident that our faculty will welcome the creative and constructive suggestions of the new task force as to how we at the Law Center might move further and more quickly along that long and winding road within the limitations of our budget and the realities of the competitive world around us. In thinking about the road we have yet to travel, however, I trust that no one will lose sight of the great distance we have come to get to this point in time and history, yet still very much committed to move even further in the right direction.

JMW:ch

cc: **BY EMAIL**

Dr. F. King Alexander, President, LSU System

Dr. Stuart R. Bell, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, LSU

Dr. Dereck Rovaris, Sr., Vice Provost for Diversity, LSU

Kenneth Barnes, Jr., Executive President, LSU Law Center Student Bar Association

Andrew Hairston, President, LSU Law Center Black Law Students Association