



February 26, 2018, 10:00 am

TO: CESS Students, Faculty, and Staff

FR: Scott L. Thomas, Dean and Professor

RE: Action Reaffirming our Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

All of us have by now been touched by some aspect of the student-led protests that have been occurring on our campus. These protests are one part of an effort to affect change toward a campus that is more just and equitable for all students, faculty, and staff in our community. This goal is firmly rooted in the University's [Our Common Ground](#) values as well as in our own [CESS mission statement](#). Those foundational values should apply to everyone, equally, within our college and across our campus. The problems underlying the protests are longstanding and very real. I want you to know that this College and I are committed to the values and priorities underlying the action that is being taken by the students and that I remain committed to working with students, faculty, and staff toward positive change in the college and across the university.

I spent the weekend meeting with students, members of our faculty, Deans from other colleges, and the President. Many of the exchanges in these meetings focused on how we, in the colleges might channel the ongoing activism into durable resolution and change at the college, department, and program levels. Through this, we identified several significant actions to take immediately. President Sullivan has outlined a number of these concrete actions in his [memo from earlier this morning](#), and I will expand on these in the days and weeks ahead. For CESS, I have committed to the following immediate actions that support and reaffirm our College's value of diversity, inclusion, and equity:

1. All faculty teaching D1 and D2 courses will be required to participate in training focusing on curriculum development and facilitate classroom conversations and interactions related to diversity. We will explore how to resource faculty time devoted to this training most effectively;
2. We will enhance our staffing devoted to diversity efforts within the college;
3. We will make additional investments in the cultivation, recruitment, and retention of faculty from underrepresented groups;
4. We will regularize and highlight opportunities for all faculty and staff to engage in diversity and cultural competency professional development;
5. We will revise annual review processes for all faculty and staff to align more clearly with our CESS mission statement: to promote a more humane and just society, free from oppression, which maximizes human potential and the quality of life for all individuals, families, and communities.

**On Thursday from 11:30 am through 1:00 pm, we will hold a College-Wide open forum Ira Allen Chapel to come together to discuss these events and what they mean for our all us—students, faculty, and staff—in the CESS Community. I hope this will provide time to reflect on and explore how our work and studies might be made more meaningful and impactful during this period of change. Please join us.**

In the meantime, the safety and well-being of members of our community remain paramount, and we will work closely with faculty, staff, and students to ensure we maintain a safe, secure, and respectful environment throughout. Mutual respect and civility, as well as adherence to the rule of law and University policies, must continue to guide all of our actions as we confront these difficult societal challenges together. In closing, I note the courage of the students who have stepped forward to express their concerns through NoNames for Justice activism. Your voices are powerful and are being heard throughout our campus community. As I observed with some in our community yesterday, protest without progress and healing pulls us backward. The real, observable progress catalyzed through this movement should provide us all with the hope that we can quickly move to the sustainable progress and healing that will make us more just, more equitable, and stronger.

Scott L. Thomas, Dean and Professor