

In November we began a search for someone to bring focus and energy to our diversity efforts, creating a new position at our University, that of Chief Diversity Officer. We were fortunate to receive an excellent pool of candidates for this position, each bringing a strong record and commitment to diversity. Through the application and interview process our search committee and I developed a deep appreciation for their experience and accomplishments in and their ideas for diversity on our campus.

It is a pleasure to share with you that Dr. David Pilgrim has accepted the invitation to serve as Chief Diversity Officer for our University. David holds a bachelors degree from Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas, and masters and doctoral degrees from Ohio State University. At Ohio State one of Dr. Pilgrim's concentrations was in race relations, and his doctoral dissertation, "College Administrators' Attitudes Toward the Adams Decree," dealt with racial segregation in higher education.

David is a tenured professor in sociology at Ferris State University and has served on our faculty since 1990. One of the courses he frequently teaches on our campus is Sociology 340, American Minorities. He was one of the original members of the Ferris State University *Diversity Counts!* Committee. He created the Jim Crow Museum as a learning laboratory that would help students learn about racism, and lay the foundation for improved race relations on our campus. David is a frequent author and speaker on racism and diversity issues throughout the country. Many of you know the recent story of how he worked as a consultant to Will Smith in the actor's directorial debut on the UPN Show, "*All of Us*."

As Chief Diversity Officer Dr. Pilgrim will serve on both the Leadership Council and the Presidents Council. As part of his initial efforts, he will be seeking to identify and connect existing diversity efforts at our University. As we move into strategic planning, David will be actively involved to make certain diversity is included in each phase of these discussions.

The selection of Dr. Pilgrim was made possible by one of the finest search committees I have served with. The members of this group were all volunteers who responded to my call for assistance in this effort. Candidly this is the first time I formed a committee through volunteers, but the result was a group of people that were firmly committed to diversity, did their homework well, and came to meetings prepared to work effectively. This experience of working with them taught me important and valuable lessons. I wish to thank each of them for their assistance -

Sandy Alspach, Professor, Humanities  
Karyn Benner, Special Programs Coordinator, Minority Student Affairs

Lisa Besemer, Director, Purchasing  
Christy Brewer, Residence Hall Director  
Cheytaya Brown, Student  
Adnan Dakkuri, Professor, Pharmacy  
Scott Herron, Assistant Professor, Biology  
Brian Pacholka, Manager, National Elastomer Lab  
Karen Paine, Secretary, Board of Trustees  
Todd Stanislav, Director, Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning  
John Thorp, Department Head, Social Sciences  
Leroy Wright, Dean of Student Life

As was repeatedly emphasized in this search, there have been significant progress in diversity efforts on our campus. However, much work and continual effort remains. Perhaps Dr. Pilgrim expressed this best in his letter of application, which concluded with this paragraph -

*I have been looking for a new challenge. Teaching is my first love, but I want a special challenge. I have a passion for diversity, meaning, a strong desire to help people understand that diversity is not something we should fear; rather, it should be embraced and celebrated. Making Ferris State University a campus that truly values diversity can not be a job for one person - or one committee - but one person, a Chief Diversity Officer, can lead and guide efforts to conceptualize, assess, nurture, and cultivate diversity as an institutional resource. I welcome that challenge.*

It is my hope that in time this will be considered an important and significant step for diversity efforts at Ferris State University. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Pilgrim on his selection and thanking him for his willingness to accept this challenge. Working together we truly can make a difference for diversity at Ferris State University.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler  
President