Dear Colleagues,

As I mentioned at the Town Hall meeting, one of my top priorities for Illinois is enhancing the diversity of our community. As I have learned about our many efforts over several decades, I have realized that they have been decentralized, diffuse, and not well-coordinated. In addition, these efforts have not had measurable long-term and sustainable outcomes. As I seek to advance new, strong, and transformational initiatives, it is critical that there is a “home” for these efforts and a central point of coordination and implementation that is clearly communicated to internal and external stakeholders.

As I begin to increase the visibility and importance of diversity as a strategic priority on our campus, my first step will be to change the name of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Access. I realize that changing the name of the office will not lead automatically to changes in our actions; however, it does signal a new direction for our campus in the area of diversity. This office is already engaged in many diversity-related initiatives, including coordinating the Inclusive Illinois initiative and related training and programming; engaging in community outreach to the local underrepresented community; facilitating diversity reporting; and monitoring diversity-related compliance obligations. This name change reflects my intent to reinvigorate our commitment to increasing racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity in our community because it is so inextricably tied to excellence.

Over the next few months, I will personally be engaged in working with an existing group, the Diversity Administrative Coordinating Team (DACT), and will expand its membership to brainstorm and outline a set of actions to aggressively advance issues of diversity on our campus. With a specific emphasis on leadership and accountability, I hope that each of you will play a significant role to ensure that our campus becomes more inclusive, more respectful of differences, and more welcoming to a wider, more diverse community.

I will be sharing more about my vision surrounding the challenges and opportunities related to diversity at the Celebration of Diversity event on November 9 at the Illinois Conference Center. I look forward to working with you on this important mission for our campus.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Phyllis M. Wise
Vice President, University of Illinois
Chancellor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign