

Subject: Fwd: Request for Comment: UA Fayetteville DEI
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 9:44:54 AM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: Laura Jacobs, Randy Massanelli, Mark Rushing, Kim Brown

Hi all...

I may not be in a position to respond before I board my flight. Mark, would you be able to pinch hit?

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From: Laura Spitalniak <lspitalniak@industrydive.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 10:39:11 AM
To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Cc: University of Arkansas <urelinfo@uark.edu>
Subject: Request for Comment: UA Fayetteville DEI

Mr. Thomas,

I'm a reporter at Higher Ed Dive covering the end of the DEI department at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Would you be able to forward me a copy of Chancellor Robinson's Tuesday message? I've also included a few questions about the process below.

- Will DEI employees be laid off?
- Will the department be officially dissolved by the start of fall term?
- Were university officials concerned the DEI department would become a target of the state legislature, as has happened at other public institutions?

My deadline today is 2p ET. Thank you so much!

Laura

--

Laura Spitalniak

She/Her

Associate Editor, [Higher Ed Dive](#)

Industry Dive | 1255 23rd Street NW, Suite 550 Washington DC 20037

Subject: FW: Request for DEI Office Closure Information
Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 3:34:29 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: Randy Massanelli
CC: Mark Rushing
Attachments: image001.png, image002.png, image003.png, image004.jpg

Randy...

Just a heads up that we received this request from a reporter at BestColleges.com asking similar questions to some other queries we've responded to. We've drafted the below response and plan to send at 5 p.m.

Let me know if you have any additional thoughts. Thanks.

The restructuring will align resources directly out of DEI to the "front lines" of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development. The goal of this restructuring is to further our land-grant mission by shifting resources in direct support of enhancing access, increasing student success and opportunity for all Arkansans for which we are accountable. All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success for the entire campus community.

While as a state institution, we are always respectful of the laws, regulations, and various viewpoints on how we carry out our mission, from an educational standpoint and as an employer, we believe that this is the best way to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications
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jfthomas@uark.edu / uark.edu



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From: Jessica Bryant <jebryant@redventures.com>
Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 3:03 PM
To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Subject: Request for DEI Office Closure Information

Hi John,

Just wanted to follow up with you about our call earlier today and see if you could email me a copy of the announcements that were sent out about the closure of the university's DEI office.

Additionally, if you are able to find a spokesperson with availability today, I'd like to ask them:

- What led to the decision to close the school's DEI office?
- How exactly do they anticipate the additional resources moving to other departments will be utilized?
- Will current or future legislation in Arkansas impact how the institution makes upcoming decisions regarding DEI?

Best,

Jessica Bryant

Senior Data Reporter

RED | VENTURES
EDUCATION


jebryant@redventures.com

redventures.com

Subject: Re: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 5:34:54 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: Josh Snyder

Happy to help!

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From: Josh Snyder <jsnyder@adgnewsroom.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 5:27:48 PM
To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Understood. Again, really appreciate your work on this on such a tight deadline.

Josh Snyder
Reporter
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
ArkansasOnline.com
Desk: (501) 399-3661
Cell: [REDACTED]

From: "John F. Thomas" <jfthomas@uark.edu>
To: "Josh Snyder" <jsnyder@adgnewsroom.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 5:24:48 PM
Subject: Re: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

You can attribute to me. That'd be fine.

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From: Josh Snyder <jsnyder@adgnewsroom.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 5:24:00 PM
To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Many thanks. Who should I attribute these responses to?

Josh Snyder
Reporter
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
ArkansasOnline.com
Desk: (501) 399-3661
Cell: [REDACTED]

From: "John F. Thomas" <jfthomas@uark.edu>
To: "Josh Snyder" <jsnyder@adgnewsroom.com>

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 5:09:06 PM
Subject: Re: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Josh...

Please see the answers to your questions below:

I hope the following info is helpful.

- All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success for the entire campus community.
- The restructuring to align resources directly out of DEI to the “front lines” of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development will be effective Aug. 1, 2023.
- Regarding your question about what others are doing, we don't know.
- While as a state institution, we are always respectful of the laws, regulations, and various viewpoints on how we carry out our mission, from an educational standpoint and as an employer, we believe that this is the best way to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

Thanks.

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications

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jfthomas@uark.edu / uark.edu

150 Forward



UA Logo + 150 mark



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From: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 3:36 PM
To: Josh Snyder <jsnyder@adgnewsroom.com>
Subject: Re: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Thanks Josh. Will do our best to get you answers today.

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From: Josh Snyder <jsnyder@adgnewsroom.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 3:34:12 PM
To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Hey John, thanks for fast response on this (while traveling, no less).

I'm looking at a deadline of this evening, which I recognize makes things pretty tight. Fortunately, I just happen to have those questions right here (trimmed to account for what's answered in the letter):

1. How will this impact students and staff?
 - a. Do you expect the university to provide the same services under this restructuring that they did with the DEI division intact?
 - i. How will those services differ?
2. Is it just the Fayetteville campus that is doing this? Are you aware of other campuses, whether at UA or elsewhere, taking similar action?
3. What prompted the decision to do this? Is this in response to pushes against DEI by lawmakers in Arkansas, elsewhere? Does the university have a response to those efforts?
4. Is there anything not in the email or these questions that you want to add?

Travel safe,
Josh Snyder
Reporter
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
ArkansasOnline.com
Desk: (501) 399-3661
Cell: [REDACTED]

From: "John F. Thomas" <jfthomas@uark.edu>
To: "Josh Snyder" <jsnyder@adgnewsroom.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 2:26:56 PM
Subject: Fwd: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Hi Josh...

I got your voicemail. Sorry I'm currently traveling back from a conference and about to take off from Charlotte. Below is the message that was sent from the Chancellor to faculty and staff.

I will have to check with the Chancellor's office on availability, but I think he might be out until next week. If you have any questions that you'd like to forward, I think we might be able to get them answered for you. Depending on your deadline, we can try to get you answers back today or, for sure, by tomorrow.

Let me know. Thanks.

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From: University of Arkansas <feedback@uark.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, June 13, 2023 1:02:17 PM
To: University of Arkansas <feedback@uark.edu>
Subject: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson



150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Dear Campus Community & Friends,

I'm writing today to share a progress report on our 150 Forward strategic planning process and some exciting opportunities that have emerged from it. Through a series of town halls, we have validated our strategic pillars of student success, employer of choice and research excellence. Each pillar now has emergent goals and performance metrics. When we return to campus in the fall our colleges, schools and units will be able to develop strategies and tactics that align with the University's goals while reflecting each unit's unique strengths and opportunities. As we go through this process, we will be realigning resources to position the University of Arkansas to better meet its mission.

Our first realignment will focus on supporting the student success and employer of choice pillars. Beginning this fall, existing resources and personnel currently assigned to the Division of DEI will be incorporated in Student Success, Student Affairs, Human Resources, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance and University Advancement so that these areas can expand programs around access, opportunity and developing a culture of belonging for all students and employees. Additionally, the Office of Equal Opportunity & Compliance will be formally aligned with Human Resources while also maintaining a direct reporting line to my office.

The strategic planning process has affirmed that supporting equal opportunity, access and belonging are critical to our land-grant mission and university

values. It is my belief based on my experience as having served as Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Provost – and now as Chancellor – that we can accomplish better outcomes by reallocating resources into these essential areas. We must strengthen our ability to achieve measurable results that enhance opportunity for all Arkansans.

I am excited to implement this new approach and in the coming weeks will share more about the specifics of this restructuring, including where to find information and key contacts.

Thank you,



Charles Robinson
Chancellor

Subject: Re: Chronicle of Higher Ed Inquiry on UArk DEI Office
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 8:03:53 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: helen.huiskes@chronicle.com
Attachments: image001.png, image002.jpg, image003.png, image004.png

Hi Helen,

I've provided Chancellor Robinson's email (below) that is the basis of the story you pointed out. To help answer your questions:

- All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success.
- The restructuring to align resources out of DEI directly to the “front lines” of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development will be effective Aug. 1, 2023.
- The university has had a long-time commitment to student access and success, and providing opportunities for all students and employees.

Chancellor's Robinson's message to faculty, staff and friends (sent Tuesday, June 13, 2023):



150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Dear Campus Community & Friends,

I'm writing today to share a progress report on our 150 Forward strategic planning process and some exciting opportunities that have emerged from it. Through a series of town halls, we have validated our strategic pillars of student success, employer of choice and research excellence. Each pillar now has emergent goals and performance metrics. When we return to campus in the fall our colleges, schools and units will be able to develop strategies and tactics that align with the University's goals while reflecting each unit's unique strengths and opportunities. As we go through this process, we will be realigning resources to position the University of Arkansas to better meet its mission.

Our first realignment will focus on supporting the student success and employer of choice pillars. Beginning this fall, existing resources and personnel currently assigned to the Division of DEI will be incorporated in Student

Success, Student Affairs, Human Resources, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance and University Advancement so that these areas can expand programs around access, opportunity and developing a culture of belonging for all students and employees. Additionally, the Office of Equal Opportunity & Compliance will be formally aligned with Human Resources while also maintaining a direct reporting line to my office.

The strategic planning process has affirmed that supporting equal opportunity, access and belonging are critical to our land-grant mission and university values. It is my belief based on my experience as having served as Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Provost – and now as Chancellor – that we can accomplish better outcomes by reallocating resources into these essential areas. We must strengthen our ability to achieve measurable results that enhance opportunity for all Arkansans.

I am excited to implement this new approach and in the coming weeks will share more about the specifics of this restructuring, including where to find information and key contacts.

Thank you,

Charles Robinson

Charles Robinson
Chancellor

John Thomas

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From: Helen Huiskes <helen.huiskes@chronicle.com>

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 11:16 AM

To: Richanne G. Kegans <rkegans@uark.edu>

Subject: Chronicle of Higher Ed Inquiry on UArk DEI Office

Hello,

Thanks for taking my call today. As I said, my name is Helen Huiskes, I'm a reporter for the Chronicle of Higher Education, and I'm working on a story about the DEI office at the University of Arkansas in light of Chancellor Robinson's [announcement](#) today. I would love to hear from someone about what's next for the members of the DEI team at Arkansas in the upcoming year, as well as some history about the office. Would someone be available sometime today or tomorrow for a short interview?

Best,

--

Helen Huiskes

Reporter

The Chronicle of Higher Education

 | helen.huiskes@chronicle.com

Subject: Re: DEI Changes
Date: Thursday, June 15, 2023 at 2:36:01 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: reagan.hubbard@hearst.com
Attachments: image001.png, image004.png, image005.jpg, image002.png, image003.png

Hi Reagan...

Mark Rushing forwarded me your message. He's a tad tied up at the moment.

I wanted to share the message that was sent to campus from Chancellor Robinson (below), as well as the story that was posted to our news site about the announcement, which I think will provide some context. https://news.uark.edu/articles/64561/access-for-students-support-for-campus-key-to-150-forward-effort?utm_source=arkansas-news&utm_medium=email_2023-06-15&utm_campaign=news_headlines&utm_content=access-for-students-support-for-campus-key-to-150-forward-effort

If you have any other questions, please let me know. Thanks!



150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Dear Campus Community & Friends,

I'm writing today to share a progress report on our 150 Forward strategic planning process and some exciting opportunities that have emerged from it. Through a series of town halls, we have validated our strategic pillars of student success, employer of choice and research excellence. Each pillar now has emergent goals and performance metrics. When we return to campus in the fall our colleges, schools and units will be able to develop strategies and tactics that align with the University's goals while reflecting each unit's unique strengths and opportunities. As we go through this process, we will be realigning resources to position the University of Arkansas to better meet its mission.

Our first realignment will focus on supporting the student success and employer of choice pillars. Beginning this fall, existing resources and personnel currently assigned to the Division of DEI will be incorporated in Student Success, Student Affairs, Human Resources, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance and University Advancement so that these areas can expand programs around access, opportunity and developing a culture of belonging for

all students and employees. Additionally, the Office of Equal Opportunity & Compliance will be formally aligned with Human Resources while also maintaining a direct reporting line to my office.

The strategic planning process has affirmed that supporting equal opportunity, access and belonging are critical to our land-grant mission and university values. It is my belief based on my experience as having served as Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Provost – and now as Chancellor – that we can accomplish better outcomes by reallocating resources into these essential areas. We must strengthen our ability to achieve measurable results that enhance opportunity for all Arkansans.

I am excited to implement this new approach and in the coming weeks will share more about the specifics of this restructuring, including where to find information and key contacts.

Thank you,

Charles Robinson

Charles Robinson
Chancellor

John Thomas

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jfthomas@uark.edu / uark.edu



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From: Hubbard, Reagan <Reagan.Hubbard@hearst.com>
Date: Thursday, June 15, 2023 at 10:31 AM
To: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>
Subject: DEI Changes

Mr. Rushing,

My name is Reagan Hubbard, I'm a reporter for 40/29 News.
Are you able to confirm the Division of DEI changes, and that an e-mail was sent out discussing it?
Thank you in advance for your time!

40
abc 29
KHBS/KHOG

Reagan Hubbard
REPORTER
2809 Ajax Ave. Suite 200 Rogers, AR 72758
Office: 479.878.6088 Mobile: [REDACTED]
Email: reagan.hubbard@hearst.com

4029tv.com

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Subject: Re: Impact of SCOTUS Affirmative Action Decision
Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2023 at 2:40:46 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: Kim Brown
Attachments: image001.png, image002.png, image005.png, image006.jpg

I've compiled the responses on DEI that we sent out over those couple of days and just listed them below:

(KFSM)

We don't anticipate any significant impact on our admissions processes but will continue to work with the UA System office for guidance as a full review of the decision is completed. As always, we will comply with all relevant rulings, laws and regulations.

As a part of our land-grant mission to provide access to higher education to Arkansans, the U of A welcomes and accepts all academically qualified students from Arkansas. We visit every high school in the state annually as a part of our recruiting efforts focused on Arkansas students and strive to provide access, opportunity and success for all students through the many academic initiatives, programs and support we offer every day. Our goal is, and always has been, to serve all of Arkansas.

(40/29)

I wanted to share the message that was sent to campus from Chancellor Robinson (below), as well as the story that was posted to our news site about the announcement, which I think will provide some context. https://news.uark.edu/articles/64561/access-for-students-support-for-campus-key-to-150-forward-effort?utm_source=arkansas-news&utm_medium=email_2023-06-15&utm_campaign=news_headlines&utm_content=access-for-students-support-for-campus-key-to-150-forward-effort

(Red Ventures Education)

The restructuring will align resources directly out of DEI to the "front lines" of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development. The goal of this restructuring is to further our land-grant mission by shifting resources in direct support of enhancing access, increasing student success and opportunity for all Arkansans for which we are accountable. All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success for the entire campus community.

While as a state institution, we are always respectful of the laws, regulations, and various viewpoints on how we carry out our mission, from an educational standpoint and as an employer, we believe that this is the best way to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

Please find the message below from Chancellor Robinson that was sent to the campus community and friends as well as a link to the story that was posted to our news site about the change.

<https://news.uark.edu/articles/64561/access-for-students-support-for-campus-key-to-150-forward-effort>

(Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

I hope the following info is helpful.

- All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success for the entire campus community.
- The restructuring to align resources directly out of DEI to the “front lines” of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development will be effective Aug. 1, 2023.
- Regarding your question about what others are doing, we don't know.
- While as a state institution, we are always respectful of the laws, regulations, and various viewpoints on how we carry out our mission, from an educational standpoint and as an employer, we believe that this is the best way to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

(KATV)

The goal of this restructuring is to further our land-grant mission by shifting resources in direct support of enhancing access, increasing student success and opportunity for all Arkansans for which we are accountable. The restructuring to align resources out of DEI directly to the “front lines” of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development will be effective Aug. 1, 2023. All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success.

We believe this restructuring will enhance our efforts to improve opportunity, access and outcomes for all students and employees and improves our ability to fulfill our land-grant mission for all Arkansans.

Also, below, I'm adding the message the chancellor sent to campus community and friends (sent Tuesday, June 13, 2023)

(Arkansas Advocate)

Please see the answers to your questions below. Thanks.

1)What is the goal of reallocating the DEI Division's resources and personnel?

The goal is to further our land-grant mission by shifting resources in direct support of enhancing access, increasing opportunity for all Arkansans and improving student success. Aligning resources directly to the “front lines” of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development will provide direct access, achieve measurable results and help us better fulfill our land-grant mission for which we are accountable to the people of Arkansas.

2) What was the weakness of the division that resulted in this realignment?

As part of our strategic planning process– we are developing new and meaningful ways to improve access and opportunity for all students.

3) Are any DEI personnel at risk of not having a job in the fall?

All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success.

4) Is this move in response to the affirmative action bill filed in the Arkansas Legislature or the impending Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action?

While as a state institution, we are always respectful of the laws, regulations, and various viewpoints on how we carry out our mission, from an educational standpoint and as an employer, we believe that this is the best way to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications
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From: Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Date: Monday, July 10, 2023 at 4:50 PM
To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Subject: FW: Impact of SCOTUS Affirmative Action Decision

Hi JT,

In preparation for APLU session, can you please also forward any updates that we sent to media on this topic?

Thank you,

Kim Brown

Director of Integrated Communications
University Relations
Office: 479-575-2916
University Relations | 211 Davis Hall
University of Arkansas | Fayetteville, AR 72701

Subject: Re: DRAFT Media Response for Review - KATV
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 4:48:40 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: Mark Rushing, Laura Jacobs, Randy Massanelli, Kim Brown
Attachments: image001.png, image002.jpg, image003.png

I just landed. Can send when approved.

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From: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 3:30:37 PM
To: Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>; John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>; Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: DRAFT Media Response for Review - KATV

Just sent what I think will be final for KATV. JT can send later. Randy will take one more look at everything around 5, but I'll be in the air by then.

Mark Rushing

Associate Vice Chancellor
University Relations

Office: 479-575-5555 | Mobile: [REDACTED]



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From: Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 3:28 PM
To: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>; John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>; Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Subject: RE: DRAFT Media Response for Review - KATV

Working with Randy on the and will send final to Charlie.

From: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 3:26 PM
To: Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>; John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>; Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: DRAFT Media Response for Review - KATV

Need to make additional edits but running out of battery power. Likely will need to hand the baton to JT as he should touch down at XNA around 5. I'm taking off soon and won't be at XNA until close to 9.

Mark Rushing

Associate Vice Chancellor
University Relations

Office: 479-575-5555 | Mobile: [REDACTED]



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From: Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 3:16 PM

To: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>; John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>; Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>

Subject: RE: DRAFT Media Response for Review - KATV

Fine by me. Thank you.

From: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 2:59 PM

To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>; Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>; Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>

Subject: Re: DRAFT Media Response for Review - KATV

Because of the way he characterized the changes, let's consider just answering with a paragraph on this one. Something more like:

Thanks for the questions Payton. The goal of this restructuring is to further our land-grant mission by shifting resources in direct support of enhancing access, increasing student success and opportunity for all Arkansans for which we are accountable. The restructuring to align resources directly to the "front lines" of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development will be effective Aug. 1, 2023. All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success.

Again, these changes are a part of our 150 Forward strategic planning process as we develop new and meaningful ways to improve access and opportunity. We believe that this is the best way to achieve those goals with greater distributed capacity to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

Mark Rushing

Associate Vice Chancellor
University Relations

Office: 479-575-5555 | Mobile: [REDACTED]



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From: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 1:58 PM

To: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>; Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>; Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>

Subject: DRAFT Media Response for Review - KATV

DRAFT RESPONSE FOR REVIEW:

Thanks Payton. Here are the answers to your questions below:

- When will the DEI division be dissolved?
The restructuring to align resources directly to the “front lines” of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development will be effective Aug. 1, 2023.
- What was the reasoning that led to the division being dissolved?
The goal of the restructuring is to further our land-grant mission by shifting resources in direct support of enhancing access, increasing student success and opportunity for all Arkansans for which we are accountable.
- What will happen to the current employees in the division?
All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success.
- What positive outcome does UARK hope comes from this?
This is just the beginning of developing new and meaningful ways to improve access and opportunity. As we continue our 150 Forward strategic planning, we anticipate more activities to further enhance these goals. Our desire and efforts to improve opportunity, access and outcomes for students and employees has not changed and will be enhanced with this restructuring. We believe that this is the best way to achieve that with greater distributed capacity to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications

University Relations

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From: Payton Dhooge <pmdhooge@sbgvtv.com>

Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 1:49 PM

To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>

Subject: RE: [EXT] Re: KATV DEI division questions

John,

Here are the questions I have:

- When will the DEI division be dissolved?
- What was the reasoning that led to the division being dissolved?
- What will happen to the current employees in the division?
- What positive outcome does UARK hope comes from this?

Thank you for taking the time out of your traveling to answer them!

Payton Dhooge

KATV/Channel 7

Assignment Editor

Cell: [REDACTED]

Office: 501-324-7507



From: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 11:26 AM

To: Payton Dhooge <pmdhooge@sbgvtv.com>

Subject: [EXT] Re: KATV DEI division questions

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Sinclair. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Payton...

Thanks for reaching out. What questions do you have?

John Thomas
Director of Media Relations
University Relations
University of Arkansas
O: 479-575-7430 | C: [REDACTED]

From: Payton Dhooge <pmdhooge@sbgvtv.com>

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 11:17 AM

To: Richanne G. Kegans <rkegans@uark.edu>

Subject: KATV DEI division questions

Hi,

My name is Payton and I'm an assignment editor for Channel 7 in Little Rock, AR.

I was hoping to get some general information on the restructuring of the school's DEI Division.

Thank you,

Payton Dhooge
KATV/Channel 7
Assignment Editor
Cell: [REDACTED]
Office: 501-324-7507



Subject: Re: DRAFT Response for ADG
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 5:07:53 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: Randy Massanelli, Laura Jacobs, Mark Rushing
CC: Kim Brown
Attachments: image001.png, image002.png, image003.png, image004.jpg

Thanks Randy. Sending now.

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications
University Relations
Office: 479-575-7430 | Mobile: [REDACTED]
208 Davis Hall
University of Arkansas | Fayetteville, AR 72701
jfthomas@uark.edu / uark.edu



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From: Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 5:06 PM
To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>, Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>, Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>
Cc: Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: DRAFT Response for ADG

On the first answer add "for the entire campus community" and the end of the sentence.
Good with rest.

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From: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 4:57:16 PM
To: Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>; Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>
Cc: Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: DRAFT Response for ADG

Great. Thanks Laura.

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From: Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 4:56:53 PM

To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>; Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>
Cc: Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Subject: RE: DRAFT Response for ADG

This is good to send. Randy's on the road but visited with Mark.

From: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 4:50 PM
To: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>; Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>
Cc: Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: DRAFT Response for ADG

Laura and Randy...

Let me know if these are good and I can send.

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From: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 4:03:02 PM
To: Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>
Cc: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>; Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: DRAFT Response for ADG

JT,
Changes incorporated below:

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From: Mark Rushing <markr@uark.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 3:47 PM
To: Laura Jacobs <laura@uark.edu>; Randy Massanelli <jrmassan@uark.edu>
Cc: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>; Kim Brown <kimb@uark.edu>
Subject: DRAFT Response for ADG

DRAFT Response for ADG:

Hey Josh,
JT is traveling so I'm filling in. I'm traveling this afternoon/evening as well, but I hope the following info

is helpful.

- All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success.
- The restructuring to align resources directly out of DEI to the “front lines” of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development will be effective Aug. 1, 2023.
- Regarding your question about what others are doing, we don't know.
- While as a state institution, we are always respectful of the laws, regulations, and various viewpoints on how we carry out our mission, from an educational standpoint and as an employer, we believe that this is the best way to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

Thanks,
Mark

Mark Rushing

Associate Vice Chancellor
University Relations

Office: 479-575-5555 | Mobile: [REDACTED]

UA Logo + 150 mark

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From: Josh Snyder <jsnyder@adgnewsroom.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 3:34:12 PM
To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Subject: Re: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Hey John, thanks for fast response on this (while traveling, no less).

I'm looking at a deadline of this evening, which I recognize makes things pretty tight. Fortunately, I just happen to have those questions right here (trimmed to account for what's answered in the letter):

- 1.
- 2.
3. How

4. will this impact students and staff?
5.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c. Do
 - d. you expect the university to provide the same services under this restructuring that they did with the DEI division intact?
 - e.
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii. How
 - iv. will those services differ?
 - v.
 - vi.
- 6.
- 7.
8. Is
9. it just the Fayetteville campus that is doing this? Are you aware of other campuses, whether at UA or elsewhere, taking similar action?
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
14. What
15. prompted the decision to do this? Is this in response to pushes against DEI by lawmakers in Arkansas, elsewhere? Does the university have a response to those efforts?
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
20. Is
21. there anything not in the email or these questions that you want to add?
- 22.
- 23.

Travel safe,
Josh Snyder
Reporter
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
ArkansasOnline.com
Desk: (501) 399-3661
Cell: [REDACTED]

From: "John F. Thomas" <jfthomas@uark.edu>
To: "Josh Snyder" <jsnyder@adgnewsroom.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 2:26:56 PM
Subject: Fwd: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Hi Josh...

I got your voicemail. Sorry I'm currently traveling back from a conference and about to take off from Charlotte. Below is the message that was sent from the Chancellor to faculty and staff.

I will have to check with the Chancellor's office on availability, but I think he might be out until next week. If you have any questions that you'd like to forward, I think we might be able to get them answered for you. Depending on your deadline, we can try to get you answers back today or, for sure, by tomorrow.

Let me know. Thanks.

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From: University of Arkansas <feedback@uark.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, June 13, 2023 1:02:17 PM
To: University of Arkansas <feedback@uark.edu>
Subject: 150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson



150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Dear Campus Community & Friends,

I'm writing today to share a progress report on our 150 Forward strategic planning process and some exciting opportunities that have emerged from it. Through a series of town halls, we have validated our strategic pillars of student success, employer of choice and research excellence. Each pillar now has emergent goals and performance metrics. When we return to campus in the fall our colleges, schools and units will be able to develop strategies and tactics that align with the University's goals while reflecting each unit's unique strengths and opportunities. As we go through this process, we will be realigning resources to position the University of Arkansas to better meet its mission.

Our first realignment will focus on supporting the student success and employer of choice pillars. Beginning this fall, existing resources and personnel currently assigned to the Division of DEI will be incorporated in Student Success, Student Affairs, Human Resources, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance and University Advancement so that these areas can expand programs around access, opportunity and developing a culture of belonging for all students and employees. Additionally, the Office of Equal Opportunity & Compliance will be formally aligned with Human Resources while also maintaining a direct reporting line to my office.

The strategic planning process has affirmed that supporting equal opportunity, access and belonging are critical to our land-grant mission and university values. It is my belief based on my experience as having served as Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Provost – and now as Chancellor – that we can accomplish better outcomes by reallocating resources into these essential areas. We must strengthen our ability to achieve measurable results that enhance opportunity for all Arkansans.

I am excited to implement this new approach and in the coming weeks will share more about the specifics of this restructuring, including where to find information and key contacts.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles Robinson".

Charles Robinson
Chancellor

Subject: Re: [EXT] Re: KATV DEI division questions
Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 7:58:53 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: pmdhooge@sbgstv.com
Attachments: image001.png, image002.png, image003.jpg, image004.png, image005.png

Thanks for the questions Payton.

The goal of this restructuring is to further our land-grant mission by shifting resources in direct support of enhancing access, increasing student success and opportunity for all Arkansans for which we are accountable. The restructuring to align resources out of DEI directly to the “front lines” of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development will be effective Aug. 1, 2023. All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success.

We believe this restructuring will enhance our efforts to improve opportunity, access and outcomes for all students and employees and improves our ability to fulfill our land-grant mission for all Arkansans.

Also, below, I’m adding the message the chancellor sent to campus community and friends (sent Tuesday, June 13, 2023)



150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Dear Campus Community & Friends,

I’m writing today to share a progress report on our 150 Forward strategic planning process and some exciting opportunities that have emerged from it. Through a series of town halls, we have validated our strategic pillars of student success, employer of choice and research excellence. Each pillar now has emergent goals and performance metrics. When we return to campus in the fall our colleges, schools and units will be able to develop strategies and tactics that align with the University’s goals while reflecting each unit’s unique strengths and opportunities. As we go through this process, we will be realigning resources to position the University of Arkansas to better meet its mission.

Our first realignment will focus on supporting the student success and employer of choice pillars. Beginning this fall, existing resources and personnel currently assigned to the Division of DEI will be incorporated in Student Success, Student Affairs, Human Resources, the Office of Equal Opportunity

and Compliance and University Advancement so that these areas can expand programs around access, opportunity and developing a culture of belonging for all students and employees. Additionally, the Office of Equal Opportunity & Compliance will be formally aligned with Human Resources while also maintaining a direct reporting line to my office.

The strategic planning process has affirmed that supporting equal opportunity, access and belonging are critical to our land-grant mission and university values. It is my belief based on my experience as having served as Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Provost – and now as Chancellor – that we can accomplish better outcomes by reallocating resources into these essential areas. We must strengthen our ability to achieve measurable results that enhance opportunity for all Arkansans.

I am excited to implement this new approach and in the coming weeks will share more about the specifics of this restructuring, including where to find information and key contacts.

Thank you,

Charles Robinson

Charles Robinson
Chancellor

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications

University Relations

Office: 479-575-7430 | Mobile: [REDACTED]

208 Davis Hall

University of Arkansas | Fayetteville, AR 72701

jfthomas@uark.edu / uark.edu



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From: Payton Dhooge <pmdhooge@sbgvtv.com>

Date: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 1:49 PM

To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>

Subject: RE: [EXT] Re: KATV DEI division questions

John,

Here are the questions I have:

- When will the DEI division be dissolved?
- What was the reasoning that led to the division being dissolved?
- What will happen to the current employees in the division?
- What positive outcome does UARK hope comes from this?

Thank you for taking the time out of your traveling to answer them!

Payton Dhooge
KATV/Channel 7
Assignment Editor
Cell: [REDACTED]
Office: 501-324-7507



From: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 11:26 AM
To: Payton Dhooge <pmdhooge@sbgvtv.com>
Subject: [EXT] Re: KATV DEI division questions

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Sinclair. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Payton...

Thanks for reaching out. What questions do you have?

John Thomas
Director of Media Relations
University Relations
University of Arkansas
O: 479-575-7430 | C: [REDACTED]

From: Payton Dhooge <pmdhooge@sbgvtv.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 11:17 AM
To: Richanne G. Kegans <rkegans@uark.edu>
Subject: KATV DEI division questions

Hi,

My name is Payton and I'm an assignment editor for Channel 7 in Little Rock, AR.

I was hoping to get some general information on the restructuring of the school's DEI Division.

Thank you,

Payton Dhooge
KATV/Channel 7
Assignment Editor
Cell: [REDACTED]
Office: 501-324-7507



Subject: Re: Media Inquiry- Campus Reform
Date: Friday, June 23, 2023 at 4:16:41 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: jrigolizzo@campusreform.org
Attachments: image001.png, image002.jpg

Hi John, your message was forwarded to me.

The Division/Office of DEI will no longer exist. All employees in that office will have the opportunity to be reassigned out of DEI into new roles and positions – different than their current roles/duties in the DEI office – that will now support all students and employees in the areas of access, recruitment, retention and success. We believe that this is the best way to fulfill the university’s land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all. These changes will be effective Aug. 1, 2023.

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications
University Relations
Office: 479-575-7430 | Mobile: [REDACTED]
208 Davis Hall
University of Arkansas | Fayetteville, AR 72701
jfthomas@uark.edu / uark.edu



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From: John Rigolizzo <JRigolizzo@campusreform.org>
Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2023 3:41 PM
To: Charles F. Robinson <Chancellor@uark.edu>
Subject: Media Inquiry- Campus Reform

Hello,

My name is John Rigolizzo. I am an editor for Campus Reform. We are doing a story on the University of Arkansas dismantling its DEI division, and what that means in practice for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices on campus and across the country. It was reported in this [Inside Higher Ed](#) article, but there seems to be some confusion about the implications of this move. Could you clarify what the University hopes to accomplish with this move? Is there a clear intent for the move to dissolve the DEI department? Any contribution would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

John Rigolizzo
Associate Editor
Campus Reform

Subject: Re: Media Inquiry
Date: Thursday, June 15, 2023 at 3:22:31 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: Jose.Carranza@kfsm.com
Attachments: image.png, image.png, image004.png, image005.jpg

Hi Jose...

The DEI office forwarded me your message. I think I sent you the message from the chancellor to campus yesterday. Below is a link to a news story we posted today about the announcement that should provide some more context.

<https://news.uark.edu/articles/64561/access-for-students-support-for-campus-key-to-150-forward-effort>

Hope this is helpful.

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications
University Relations
Office: 479-575-7430 | Mobile: [REDACTED]
208 Davis Hall
University of Arkansas | Fayetteville, AR 72701
jfthomas@uark.edu / uark.edu



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From: Carranza, Jose <Jose.Carranza@kfsm.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 3:17 PM
To: Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion <dvrsty@uark.edu>
Subject: Media Inquiry

Hello!

I'm with 5NEWS and we're trying to do a story on the reallocation of the division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Is there someone with DEI available for an interview? If not, could we receive a statement?

Thank You For Your Time!

[Jose Carranza](#)

Multiskilled Journalist | KFSM-TV



ATEGNA Company | 5101 S. 48th Street, Springdale, AR 72762

jose.carranza@kfsm.com | P. [REDACTED] | 5NEWSonline.com

Subject: Re: Quote needed from U Ark on DEI changes (2 pm deadline, Washington Times)
Date: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 12:14:01 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: ssalai@washingtontimes.com
Attachments: image001.png, image002.jpg

Sean,

Your question was forwarded to me. While as a state institution, we are always respectful of the laws, regulations, and various viewpoints on how we carry out our mission, from an educational standpoint and as an employer, we believe that this is the best way to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

Also, to be clear, the reassignments of staff in our DEI office directly into new roles and positions that will now support all students and employees including in the areas of access, recruitment, retention and success, will become effective Aug. 1, 2023.

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications
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University of Arkansas | Fayetteville, AR 72701
jfthomas@uark.edu / uark.edu



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From: University of Arkansas <urelinfo@uark.edu>
Date: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 8:18 AM
To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>
Subject: FW: Quote needed from U Ark on DEI changes (2 pm deadline, Washington Times)

From: Sean Salai <ssalai@washingtontimes.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 8:08 AM
To: Sean Salai <ssalai@washingtontimes.com>
Subject: Quote needed from U Ark on DEI changes (2 pm deadline, Washington Times)

Hi University of Arkansas Fayetteville,

I'm the culture reporter at The Washington Times newspaper, writing on a 2 pm EST deadline.

Insider Higher Ed reports (below) that you've dissolved and reallocated your school's DEI office. Can you email me a comment telling me what role states banning DEI offices in college or other political developments (ie the Supreme Court's expected ruling against affirmative action in admissions) played in your decision? You can also reach me on my cell at [REDACTED].

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/state-oversight/2023/06/21/university-arkansas-dissolves-dei-office?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=aa152acb58-DNU_2021_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcbc04421-aa152acb58-237322669&mc_cid=aa152acb58&mc_eid=a61f24aa34

Respectfully,

Sean Salai

--

Sean Salai
General Assignment/Culture Reporter
The Washington Times
Office: 202-636-4914
Cell: [REDACTED]

ssalai@washingtontimes.com

@SeanSalai

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Subject: Re: Request for DEI Office Closure Information
Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 4:54:29 PM Central Daylight Time
From: John F. Thomas
To: Jessica Bryant
Attachments: image001.png, image002.png, image003.png, image004.jpg, image005.png, image006.png

Jessica...

The restructuring will align resources directly out of DEI to the “front lines” of our support for student success and employee recruitment and development. The goal of this restructuring is to further our land-grant mission by shifting resources in direct support of enhancing access, increasing student success and opportunity for all Arkansans for which we are accountable. All the DEI office employees will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a new position in HR, OEOC, Advancement, Student Affairs, (or other units) focused on student or employee recruitment and success for the entire campus community.

While as a state institution, we are always respectful of the laws, regulations, and various viewpoints on how we carry out our mission, from an educational standpoint and as an employer, we believe that this is the best way to fulfill our land-grant mission of access and opportunity for all.

Please find the message below from Chancellor Robinson that was sent to the campus community and friends as well as a link to the story that was posted to our news site about the change.

<https://news.uark.edu/articles/64561/access-for-students-support-for-campus-key-to-150-forward-effort>



150 Forward Update from Chancellor Robinson

Dear Campus Community & Friends,

I'm writing today to share a progress report on our 150 Forward strategic planning process and some exciting opportunities that have emerged from it. Through a series of town halls, we have validated our strategic pillars of student success, employer of choice and research excellence. Each pillar now has emergent goals and performance metrics. When we return to campus in the fall our colleges, schools and units will be able to develop strategies and tactics that align with the University's goals while reflecting each unit's unique strengths and opportunities. As we go through this process, we will be realigning resources to position the University of Arkansas to better meet its mission.

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The strategic planning process has affirmed that supporting equal opportunity, access and belonging are critical to our land-grant mission and university values. It is my belief based on my experience as having served as Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Provost – and now as Chancellor – that we can accomplish better outcomes by reallocating resources into these essential areas. We must strengthen our ability to achieve measurable results that enhance opportunity for all Arkansans.

I am excited to implement this new approach and in the coming weeks will share more about the specifics of this restructuring, including where to find information and key contacts.

Thank you,

Charles Robinson

Charles Robinson
Chancellor

--

John Thomas

Director of Media Relations and Core Communications

University Relations

Office: 479-575-7430 | Mobile: [REDACTED]

208 Davis Hall

University of Arkansas | Fayetteville, AR 72701

jfthomas@uark.edu / uark.edu



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From: Jessica Bryant <jebryant@redventures.com>

Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 3:03 PM

To: John F. Thomas <jfthomas@uark.edu>

Subject: Request for DEI Office Closure Information

Hi John,

Just wanted to follow up with you about our call earlier today and see if you could email me a copy of the announcements that were sent out about the closure of the university's DEI office.

Additionally, if you are able to find a spokesperson with availability today, I'd like to ask them:

- What led to the decision to close the school's DEI office?
- How exactly do they anticipate the additional resources moving to other departments will be utilized?
- Will current or future legislation in Arkansas impact how the institution makes upcoming decisions regarding DEI?

Best,

Jessica Bryant

Senior Data Reporter

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EDUCATION



jebryant@redventures.com

redventures.com