

Announcing our Interim Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement

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Dear Saint Louis University community,

We are all unbelievably saddened by the recent passing of Dr. Jonathan Smith. His love for life, the people around him, and seemingly everyone he encountered, were a beacon of light. This was on display every time we were fortunate to be in his presence, through his relational approach to his work, and in interactions with all of us on a daily basis.

Over the final months of the spring semester, Jonathan and I were working on plans to reorganize, and invest in, the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement. Jonathan was always passionate about the work of the Office, and so proud of those who carried out that work on a daily basis, but we both realized the Office wasn't sufficiently resourced to accomplish the work and realize the outcomes we need on our campus and in our community.

To keep this important work moving forward, I am pleased to announce that Dr. Amber Johnson, who was recently appointed as an Associate Provost in the office, will serve as the Interim Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement effective immediately. As President Pestello said in [his recent message announcing their appointment](#), Dr. Johnson brings many strengths to this position, including a deep commitment to marginalized communities.

One of Dr. Johnson's first tasks as interim VP was to lead a strategic planning session with the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement, and begin incorporating the newest members in that division, including the team from the Center for Service and Community Engagement, as well as several new hires to the office. That session wrapped up on August 6, and I am pleased with the progress made during those three days.

Looking ahead to the rest of the academic year, we will launch a national search for the permanent Vice President immediately. In the coming weeks, I will announce an internal search committee that will work with an external search firm to carry out the process. The next leader of this office will be expected to carry on the legacy of Dr. Smith and build on the work that Dr. Johnson and the team will carry out this academic year. I expect the next permanent VP to be in place by July 1, 2022.

Sincerely,

Mike Lewis, Ph.D.
Provost