

Launching the Search for SLU's Next VP for Diversity and Innovative Community Engagement

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Dear Saint Louis University community,

This week, we officially established the search committee for the next permanent Vice President for the Division of Diversity and Innovative Community Engagement (DICE). Ever since this position was created after the Clock Tower Accords in 2014, it has served as an integral part of the University's Leadership Council and has advanced our much-needed work in the areas of diversity and inclusion, social justice, and healing that our community has needed for a long time.

First, I want to thank Dr. Amber Johnson, who has served in the interim role since the passing of Dr. Jonathan C. Smith earlier this year. Dr. Smith was appointed as a special assistant to the President in 2014 following the OccupySLU movement and the initial Clock Tower Accords. This week, we dedicated the amphitheater at the clock tower in honor of Dr. Smith, and Dr. Johnson emceed a beautiful ceremony to remember Dr. Smith and his work. Our community is grateful to them and the strides they have taken to move the Division forward in such a short time in the role.

Expectations of our next leader

Our next VP for DICE will be a collaborative, inclusive, innovative professional with an extensive background in social justice and community engagement. We have a significant amount of work to do as a community to address the past traumas experienced by the marginalized communities both within our campus and in the areas surrounding our campuses. The next permanent VP will be integral to this work and will help us realize that this work is all of our responsibilities, not just for this position or this division.

Similar to other recent and ongoing searches, we are carefully and thoughtfully crafting the expectations of this new leader — as well as the job description — in the coming weeks. Our entire community will have the opportunity to provide feedback via listening sessions in the first part of November, as well as via a feedback form. That information will be shared with our search firm, Isaacson Miller, and the entire search committee to help draft the position profile and job description in the coming weeks.

Search committee

I am excited about the work that I know our search committee will accomplish in the next several months, and grateful to the faculty, staff and student leaders who nominated representatives to serve.

The search committee is chaired by Chris Tinson, Ph.D., Chair of the Department of African American Studies. Our search is supported by Stephanie Fidel, Nathaniel Rodriguez Sosa, Afi Tettey-Fio, and Diana Carmona from Isaacson Miller, a leading firm in national higher education and chief diversity officer searches.

The search committee is composed of the following individuals from across the University:

Chris Tinson, Ph.D., Chair, Department of African American Studies, College of Arts and Sciences (committee chair)

Yuna Ayala, Ph.D., Associate Professor & Vice Chair- Doisy Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, School of Medicine

Judi Buncher, Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Mission and Identity

Belinda Dantley, J.D., Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, School of Law

Dannielle Joy Davis, Ph.D., Professor - Higher Education Administration, School of Education

Ruth Groff, Ph.D., Associate Professor - Political Science and Director, Minor in Global and Local Social Justice, College of Arts and Sciences

Toschia M. Hogan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor - Management, Richard A. Chaifetz School of Business

Kendra Johnston, MSW, Director, Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources, Student Development

Darryl Jones, University Trustee and Chair - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee of the Board of Trustees

Emily Lutenski, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair - American Studies, College of Arts and Sciences

Sheila Manion, Vice President for Development

Zahva Naeem, Senior; Senator for the College of Arts and Sciences, Student Government Association

Gary Ritter, Ph.D., Dean, School of Education

Brendan Roediger, J.D., Professor, School of Law and Director, Litigation Clinic

Vanessa Sarmiento, Senior; Vice President of Communication and Internal Affairs, Student Government Association

Michael Sheeran, S.J., University Trustee and member of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees

Kiara Webber, President, Black Alumni Association

The committee met for the first time today, during which they received their charge from me, and they will begin their work in November. As I mentioned above, the first part will involve listening sessions with the community to receive feedback on the position, after which they will write and post the position description, and then work with the search firm to start building the pool of candidates. The

group will provide regular updates to the community from a dedicated email account, vp.dice.search@slu.edu. Any questions about the process can be directed to that email address.

I hope to have a leader named by the beginning of the next academic year, which begins on July 1, 2022. Thank you in advance for your participation and feedback during this very important process.

Sincerely,

Mike Lewis, Ph.D.
Provost