

9 June, 2020

(revised from 14 May to include ChiLA letter)

We, the faculty senators of Michigan State University, wish to express our unwavering support of the Black Faculty, Staff, and Administrators Association; the Coalition of Racial/Ethnic Minorities; and the Chicano/Latino Faculty, Staff, Specialists, and Graduate Student Association in their responses to the outcome of the Provost search. In standing with these communities, the Faculty Senate wishes to share the burden of advocacy, and affirm our commitment to enacting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at MSU.

If we want to expand on and practice the values of DEI, then we need to hire accordingly. MSU continues to assure its community that DEI are of paramount importance, especially in the face of numerous and egregious racist acts across campus as recently as this academic year. The appointment of a provost with extensive leadership, expertise, and experience in these areas, as two of the three finalists had, would have been a powerful act in demonstrating our commitment to improve. We had a rare opportunity here and we did not act on it.

We recognize President Stanley's efforts toward transparency in the finalists vetting process, and in compiling a search committee with faculty members that represented different constituencies. These gestures built trust between us, which recent events on this campus, and the long-standing structures that enabled those events, had sorely eroded. And yet at the most crucial moment of the search, the actual selection of our chief academic officer, among such a talented and excellent finalist pool, MSU chose not to act on its commitment to diversity. Our reaction is not personal to Dr. Woodruff, nor do we wish to dispute that she is qualified, in absolute terms, for such a position. But for many, this is a disappointing outcome. For many, it is also deeply hurtful.

Moving forward, we will look to see that the Chief Diversity Officer is a fully-resourced position, both financially, with respect to staffing, and especially in terms of integration across the university community, so that in the future we will enact the broad institutional changes that we say are a priority.

The Faculty Senate

Votes endorsing this statement: (Yay) (Nay) (Abstain)