



President Samuel L. Stanley, Jr. gave the following remarks at the October 13, 2020 meeting of Faculty Senate:

President

Samuel L. Stanley, Jr.

So, thank you, Jennifer, and welcome, everybody. And it's a pleasure to be with you this afternoon. I'm going to keep my remarks very short. Again, I'll probably give a somewhat longer report to University Council when we convene.

Because there are so many things happening with DEI on your agenda today, I did want to mention a couple of things about that. The first was that, of course, it remains a very high priority for the university. And I think it's one of the things, again, that I'm pleased to say I believe we're making progress on. And one element of that progress is the selection of the Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer. Jabbar Bennett of Northwestern University will be joining Michigan State University, pending Board of Trustees approval, on December 1st. Jabbar, as you know, was selected with a national search. And I want to thank Chris Long and Melissa Woo, who co-chaired that search committee. And I want to thank everybody who participated---the other members of the search committee, as well as faculty and staff who were involved in the outreach programs to have the campus meet the candidates. I think these were very important. And I think all of the candidates who I talked to afterwards commented on the fact that this was an important part of the process for them to have a chance to meet faculty and staff and to hear how committed people were and how concerned they were about DEI at Michigan State University.

So Jabbar, as everyone knows, was a former Associate Provost for Diversity, Inclusion and CDO at Northwestern University. And he actually established Northwestern's Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion. And [he is] nationally recognized, I think, for his efforts in this area. So I look forward to working with him. I know many of you will have the opportunity to work with him as well. He will probably be reaching out to some groups before he starts on December 1st so he



The President, cont.

can hit the ground running. But obviously, there's much work to be done.

One of the key things that he'll be working with, of course, is the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan. He will have accountability for implementing that plan, but also have the opportunity, given his timing, to work with the Steering Committee in developing that plan. And, again, I want to thank Wanda Lipscomb and Luis Garcia, who've been doing an outstanding job with the DEI committee preparing it. I think that they're-- I've had a report from them on their progress, and I think they're making, as I said, significant inroads into an important task, in terms of inventory and what we're doing, in terms of defining the terms for DEI, in terms of taking a look at critical issues that the [Task Force on Racial Equity identified], on policing, on campus climate, and how our faculty and staff are constituted in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion. All of these, I think, are important things. And, again, I see progress going in each of those areas.

A critical thing that we need to do to be successful, I think, is to educate our faculty, staff, and our students on issues related to DEI. And so we have a DEI learning program which will begin later this month. This is-- It will be for employees and students. It's a critical element of our educational mission, as I said, and it will move ahead regardless of the executive orders on workforce training or other restrictions. We plan to move ahead with this educational process going forward, again, because we think it's critically important to the university.

Since you'll be talking about policing today, I did want to mention that we're receiving the [Task Force on Racial Equity's] report on policing. I had a chance to discuss it with the chair of the Task Force, Professor Cobbina. We've also had a chance to arrange a meeting between Professor Cobbina and Interim Chief Doug Monette to talk about the Task Force as well. And I think we're already seeing progress in addressing some of the issues,



The President, cont.

particularly around expanding anti-bias, inclusion, anti-bias unit activity, and more community-based policing outreach. And I think that are important things that we can see moving forward. And we're certainly reviewing what the oversight board for the police looks like as well. I think there have been some good suggestions made on how we might change that as well. So I think all of these things give me confidence that we're moving in the right direction. But there's extraordinary work to do.

And I think we all know that this current environment is very charged, politically charged. And so I think there are-- As campaigns continue, there's going to be opportunities for more issues to arise. And I hope, again, that we'll continue to have these important discussions but do our best as a campus community to do them in the most civil and respectful way that we can. And that's incredibly important.

I wanted to make one quick comment about something that academic governance has been working on, just to give you my feeling about it so you understand my thoughts on this issue. And that was the issue around the faculty policy about webcams, essentially, in classes. And I think-- I know there was some confusion, perhaps initially, on whether this is already policy or not policy, whether it's new policy, when it was started. But I think the important thing is that, you know, from my conversations with our general counsel, Brian Quinn, there are real concerns about privacy issues for students in class and making sure that we're not sharing information with others that might not have been available if we weren't doing the current system by having cameras essentially on people's residences or in any environment. And so the policy really stated that faculty cannot require a student to turn on their webcam unless there is a compelling justification based on assessment or a specific learning goals that require a faculty member to be able to see a student. So we want faculty to really help students understand why, if it's technically feasible and students are comfortable doing so, they should leave their webcams on, why it's



The President, cont.

beneficial to their learning. However, they're not allowed to compel. Faculty should not be compelling a student to turn on their camera or penalizing them for not turning on their camera absent that specific and compelling justification. So for assessment, for example, one could imagine, to see if somebody is actually taking the test, the person taking the test is actually the student. One can imagine those kind of compelling justifications. But I think they have to fall into that category, again, related to assessment or specific learning goals before trying to compel someone, again, from this privacy reasons.

So I want to conclude. I talked about the election already. I want to conclude by encouraging all Spartans to vote. The MSU Vote Campus Coalition continues to work to accomplish that goal. Partners include local communities, the Secretary of State, the League of Women Voters. It's co-chaired by Renee Brown, the Director for the Center of Community Engaged Learning, and Suchrita Webster, the MSU Community Liaison. And they sent a message to the deans/department chairs list last Tuesday with a link to a toolkit that can help support faculty engagement and encouraging our students to vote. Again, in a nonpartisan way. Just encouraging them to exercise their right as a U.S. citizen to vote. So I hope everyone will do that. You know, this is critical to the functioning of our democracy.

So I'll stop there.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tyler Silvestri".

Tyler Silvestri
Secretary for Academic Governance