Jill Hernandez, Initiatives for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion at Central Washington University

My team has the experience of having an ethicist as a Dean—one who frequently raises the Scanlon question, “What do we owe each other?” Different spheres of influence within a university lead to different obligations to meet the diverse needs of others. For DEIB (diversity, equity, inclusivity, and belonging) initiatives, the chief academic officer of the university should focus attention on systems which have historically, disproportionately negatively impacted those on the margins. Nearly every institution discusses systemic racism, for example, but far fewer act within their spheres of influence to enact change. WWU has made significant strides in meeting the diverse needs of students, staff, and faculty—strides which I would support and advance as Provost. There are three areas in my current sphere of influence which map onto the Provost role, and which I have addressed as Dean to eradicate racism and implicit bias, and to improve our ability to fulfill our obligations to each other: hiring, tenure and promotion evaluation, and budget/student experience.

* **Hiring.** A major focus for me has been on hiring. Upon arriving at CWU, I implemented a “Rooney Rule” for faculty hiring, which requires departments to identify areas of diverse need within their unit and provides additional resources to meet those needs by finding the best candidates from the broadest pools. Since I arrived, 100% of our hires at the tenure-track (faculty) and director level (staff) and above have met a diverse need for their unit! The College is leading CWU’s efforts at recruiting the strongest faculty and staff in our history. Recruitment is crucial, but mentoring keeps good people at good places. The College’s “Intellectual Leadership” program stands in the gap of formal mentoring programs at the University, and pairs senior faculty and staff outside of our College with our diverse new hires, who often desire additional connections and relationships to ease the transition to rural Washington.

* **Tenure and Promotion.** Different than previous deans within the College, I empowered the College’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Committee to be a Task Force that would take action (i.e., make decisions) to address systemic racism. They developed an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory message for the new College Personnel Manual, which was also encouraged to be adopted by all College Departments for their manuals. My Dean Team revised the College manual to include their message, along with the following verbiage about SEOIs (student evaluations, which have so demonstratively discriminated against women and minorities): “According to CBA 22.4.1, SEOIs are part of the dossier for evaluation. The College views SEOI only as a single (and flawed) piece of the evaluative picture, whose most important aspect is the qualitative data from students that helps form a picture of the faculty member’s strengths and opportunities for growth.” A result is that, although the collective bargaining agreement requires faculty to include student evaluations in their tenure and promotion materials, the only time I use them for review is if their qualitative data reflect patterns of excellence or concern.

* **Budget/Student Experience.** There are regular budgetary decisions I have made to increase belonging through DEI. I am the only Dean to provide “Goods & Services” funding for interdisciplinary studies programs—within the College, these include Africana/Black Studies (ABS), Asian Studies, and Latino/a American Studies (LLAS). These are low-enrolled programs, which also struggle to hire at the TT level, but we created TT lines for ABS through the Liberal Studies program and LLAS through the Communication Department. Those are important contributions, but I am particularly excited to address systemic change this year through our “Tuition Waiver Review”. The Review will have longitudinal impact by addressing how the College awards “tuition waivers” (College-absorbed allocation reductions which waive tuition for undergraduate and graduate students). The revamp will allocate those resources to focus on providing for students who otherwise would not be able to attain a degree, students who help us meet the diverse needs of our community, and students who seek to develop as leaders for their future communities. A result will be to expand access to tuition waivers to include students for whom a college degree will transform their family trees.