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DEI Efforts Nomination Packet Reflection

For a moment, let's depart from the campus of The University of Arkansas to take a tour of Plainville University. Plainville University (PU) isn't far away from here but might as well be in a different universe. At PU there is only one race, one religion, one gender, and merely a couple of recreational activities to choose from. The students and staff of PU are never challenged to see situations from another perspective, because there is only one to speak of. The alumni of PU struggle to solve problems in their post-grad jobs because they have never run into problems like these at college. These alumni sit and stew, thinking "my time at PU was so pleasant, no one ever struggled to understand each other, nothing ever rocked the boat..."

Hope you enjoyed your time visiting the campus of Plainville University, let's now take the bus back to The University of Arkansas. While the alumni of PU were accurate in reminiscing on their time in college as pleasant and easy, it was not realistic to the reality of the modern world. After all, the people of the world are much more like a variegated afghan blanket than a patchwork quilt. People of numerous colors, shapes, and sizes woven together as opposed to harsh borders dividing them. While it is true that this metaphor may be best viewed through rose colored glasses, I contend that this metaphor should be a goal to strive for in our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

The DEI programs at The University of Arkansas would have the students of PU's jaws on the floor. While our school has more DEI options than some, there is still much progress to be made. While it is fair to say that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted virtually all facets of life as we knew it, that is not a valid excuse for why there wasn't more accessible DEI events this school year. The struggles of diverse and vulnerable students do not cease during a pandemic and neither should the efforts of the majority groups to understand them.

The University of Arkansas should strive to facilitate lectures and events on a weekly basis that further the DEI efforts of the school and community. These events should always have the option to be attended virtually. Furthermore, these events regarding diverse cultures and orientations should be planned and facilitated by members of that group, preferably students.

The courses Introduction to Cultural Competency and Multicultural Families should be mandatory for all students of the University. These classes open the mind of the student to not only learn about diverse classmates and community members but to also practice perspective taking. Perspective taking is one of the most powerful tools a human can possess. This activity can prevent violence, vitriol, and even war. On a smaller scale, perspective taking allows students on our campus to develop rich networks of diverse friends and a complex understanding of the world at large.

After completing thought provoking classes such as Multicultural Families and pursuing this distinction for my personal DEI efforts, my time at The University of Arkansas will forever be marked by the leaps and bounds I made in my journey towards cultural competency. The journey is never over, rather it continues to unroll in front of me after every small triumph. So, as the graduating students of The U of A and PU throw their mortarboards into the air in victory, let us remember that this is just the beginning of our cultural competency journey, with any luck, it will never cease.