

TO: UI Community

FROM: David J. Skorton

**RE: Follow up on Presidential Actions on *Campus Climate Committee Report*
and *Sexual Harassment and Unwelcomed Behavior at the University of Iowa*
*Report***

I write to you today regarding the campus climate at the University of Iowa. Our new Strategic Plan, *The Iowa Promise*, makes clear the UI's aspiration *to attract the most talented faculty, staff, and students and to provide an environment where they can discover and fulfill their potential*. Achieving this aspiration requires creating and maintaining a campus climate in which all members of the campus community are treated with dignity and respect, their contributions are valued, and all are free to express their opinions and participate in campus life. Such an environment is free of discrimination, harassment and violence. I take seriously my leadership responsibility, along with other senior administrators, to promote a safe, welcoming, inclusive and just university community.

There are several indicators that continued effort is needed to improve the campus climate at the University of Iowa. These indicators are apparent in the 2005 annual reports of the Office of the Ombudsperson and the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, the recent *Sexual Harassment and Unwelcomed Behavior Report* and some behavior in response to the "Pink Locker Room" issue. In this document, I address concerns about our campus climate, provide a follow up on actions taken in response to the *Campus Climate Committee Report* and respond to the recent *Sexual Harassment and Unwelcomed Behavior Report*.

The most recent Annual Report of Complaints Filed: FY2005 of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity documents that various forms of discrimination continue on our campus. Additionally, the 2005 report of the Office of the Ombudsperson shows that a degree of incivility continues among various campus groups, ranging from insensitive and discourteous to abusive and violent behavior. Increased vigilance is needed to address and prevent such behaviors through education, training, and consistent enforcement of university policies.

Some responses to the “Pink Locker Room” issue are troubling examples of discriminatory, abusive and disrespectful behavior on our campus. The hostility and threats of violence expressed during the debate are antithetical to our core values of integrity, respect and responsibility. Responses that trivialized and demeaned those who see homophobia and sexism inscribed in the pink locker rooms at Kinnick Stadium oppose our core values of diversity and community. Creating a welcoming, inclusive and just community requires that we take seriously concerns raised by all members of the community and seek to understand their perspectives. We must engage in open and honest discourse in ways that value and do not diminish each other. We also must vigorously support and protect the academic freedom and right of free speech of all members of our community.

I now share with you specific follow-up on actions taken in response to the recommendations of the *Campus Climate Committee Report* and the actions to be taken in response to the recommendations of the *Sexual Harassment and Unwelcomed Behavior Report*. The *Campus Climate Committee Report* was completed in 2003 and recommended the replication of the 1993 Campus Survey on Sexual Harassment, which was completed in January 2006. Each report was posted on the President’s Office website

(<http://www.uiowa.edu/~ournews/2003/october/102403climate-report.html>); and http://www.uiowa.edu/president/task-forces/sexual_harass_survey/index.html). I asked each Vice President and others to review the *Campus Climate Committee Report* and act on recommendations in their respective areas of responsibility, as well as propose actions in response to the *Sexual Harassment and Unwelcomed Behavior Report*.

I previously expressed my appreciation for the work of these committees and do so again here. I am grateful for the important contributions they have made to advancing our understanding of the prevalence of sexual harassment and violence on our campus and how to address these issues. In particular, the *Sexual Harassment and Unwelcomed Behavior Report* clearly and irrefutably indicates the distance we still have to travel to address sexual harassment and unwelcomed behavior on our campus.

Conclusions of both reports indicate a need for building comprehensive solutions to address sexual harassment and violence. Their recommendations suggest that comprehensive solutions call for administrative leadership and training, involve campus and external constituents, and require raising awareness and improving existing policies and procedures. I view addressing discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence as fundamental to promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity at the University of Iowa.

Since release of the *Campus Climate Committee Report*, many of its recommendations have been implemented. These actions are described below, along with further actions to be taken. After careful consideration of *Sexual Harassment and Unwelcomed Behavior Report*, I accept all ten of the report's recommendations and have directed that all be implemented. In the section that follows, recommendations from each report are listed, along with actions that

are already being taken and decisions on further actions. When recommendations from the two reports are closely related, these are listed together.

I am grateful for the efforts of Professor Salome Raheim, Senior Associate to the President, who played a central role in the formulation of this response and who will assist in monitoring the implementation of actions detailed here.