

## Statement on inclusive excellence at Iowa State

*Jonathan Wickert, Senior Vice President and Provost*

Iowa State University is committed to offering a safe and welcoming campus, and providing learning environments that help all students succeed. To realize this goal, it is important for students, faculty, and staff to honor Iowa State's Principles of Community, which include promoting diversity among ideas, cultures, and experiences; treating others with dignity and respect; and striving to overcome historical and divisive biases in our society.

Fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion is one of the most pressing challenges facing higher education today. While people may disagree on the solutions, there should be no debate that problems exist.

Devoting class time to discuss these issues is entirely appropriate, and I applaud the instructor and guest speaker for addressing the topic professionally, and within the context of students' academic discipline. These efforts help improve classroom climate for students, and support our culture of inclusivity, without impacting academic freedom.

As Jonathan Sturm, professor and president of Iowa State's Faculty Senate has noted, "It is fundamental and critical to American society at large that our educational institutions — from primary through collegiate levels — pursue with passion, conviction, and dedication the complete education of our citizens, not only teaching vocational skills, but also conveying the ideals of freedom and humanity that are at the bedrock of our nation. As a university of scientific and humanistic inquiry, our work is to provide our citizens with a *complete* education—the kind that frees and empowers them to make the best decisions for their own and their country's future."

Building and enhancing diversity can be particularly challenging at institutions like Iowa State, which has a predominantly white student population; and in disciplines like software engineering, which have low enrollments of women and underrepresented students. This is an issue of national importance. Iowa State recently received several grants from the National Science Foundation to help recruit and retain diverse students in STEM fields, and we are proud of our efforts to create both a workforce and faculty that mirror our state and national population.

It is my belief that students themselves have the most to gain when diversity and inclusion are part of their education. Iowa State graduates will work on teams with people from different backgrounds, and interact with people around the globe. One of the greatest, and sometimes hidden, advantages of higher education is exposure to people and ideas different from our own.