

Dear Dean William Karpus,

The purpose of this letter is to urge the University of Wisconsin (UW) Graduate School, in concert with other schools and colleges, to develop and deploy much needed guidelines and training modules concerning issues of Equity and Diversity for graduate students, in order to better prepare them for their time on this campus and in their future careers. Graduate students are commonly faced with situations throughout their studies that require them to skillfully handle sensitive issues related to equity and diversity in which we provide them no training. They face these situations as mentors and teachers as well as mentees through their research and classroom experiences. As teachers and mentors for more junior students, graduate students find themselves in situations where they feel personally responsible for guiding behavior and maintaining a welcoming climate for which we provide them no resources. In addition, they have voiced their concerns as mentees where they have limited power and have faced situations that are highly stressful, have huge impacts on their lives and careers, and feel limited in their ability to make positive changes. The lack of sufficient resources and training for graduate students has long-term impacts on their lives and careers not only while here at UW-Madison, but throughout their lifetime. These concerns are echoed in the last campus climate survey where one in three students reported experiencing or witnessing situations that include hostile and intimidating behavior. We believe that a new training program for all incoming graduate students should be developed to provide them the tools to work through these situations and provide them with awareness of campus resources that are available to guide them through these processes.

Around the campus we have found that there are many different trainings available for teaching and research assistants that cover equity and diversity topics. However, many of these programs are not capable of handling the large number of graduate students on campus and have very targeted audiences that do not accommodate the needs of the diverse graduate student experiences. We believe that an initiative to develop this training from your office will set the tone for the commitment to the needs of our graduate students, benefit many generations to come, will be efficient in terms of resources for development, will be the most widely applicable to all graduate students, and will serve to further prepare UW-Madison graduates to spread our vision for equity and diversity throughout the world upon graduating. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this effort and look forward to working with you to advance the mission of this university.

Sincerely,

CALS Equity and Diversity Committee

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