

President Mahony Names Dr. Sheila Caldwell Inaugural SIU System Vice President of Antiracism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University President Dan Mahony announced today that he will recommend Dr. Sheila Caldwell to the SIU Board of Trustees to serve as the inaugural Vice President for Antiracism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) for the multi-campus university system. The board will vote to approve the hire at its upcoming meeting on April 29.

Caldwell was chosen after an extensive national search was narrowed to five finalists who were interviewed by a search committee and various constituency groups made up of faculty, staff and students from across the university's campuses. Pending board approval, she will join the president's staff in mid-July.

"This was an outstanding search and the dedication of everyone who participated sends a clear and convincing signal that the SIU System community is completely dedicated to fighting racism and promoting diversity, equity and inclusion. As our work progressed, it became obvious that Dr. Caldwell is the best person for the job. She will be a tremendous asset to the SIU community and our system leadership team as we work toward developing a more diverse and inclusive campus culture," said Mahony.

It was not just this commitment to promote diversity, equity and inclusion but to create a senior level university leadership position charged with fighting racism in all its forms that drew Dr. Caldwell and many others to apply for the position which will be transformative on the university's campuses and in the communities that support them.

"I am very excited to work with visionary and courageous leaders who have not only created a position like this, but have given it both the responsibility and the resources to bring together an entire university system dedicated to fighting racism of all kinds. I am honored to work at a premier system in higher education with exceptionally talented team members and students and am looking forward to collaborating across the SIU System campuses to craft policies and install systems that cultivate antiracism, diversity, equity and inclusive excellence," said Caldwell.

A Chicago native, Dr. Caldwell is currently the inaugural Chief Intercultural Engagement Officer at Wheaton College where she works to enhance equity, transform culture and improve institutional effectiveness related to diversity. As a collaborator with the college's senior cabinet, in her role she led efforts to implement for the first time, a Diversity Commitment Statement, Gender Equity Vision Statement, diversity strategic plan, bias policy and bias incident report system to improve campus climate. She also organized a two-day diversity symposium which featured key-note speaker Dr. Bernice King.

With experiences in both industry and academia, Caldwell previously served as Advisor to the President on Diversity at the University of North Georgia, as Director of Complete College Georgia and as the Dual Enrollment Coordinator for DeKalb Technical College. She holds a BS in Business Marketing from Northern Illinois University, an MA in Educational Leadership from Argosy University in Atlanta Georgia and EdD in Workforce Education from the University of Georgia.

“One of the key factors that makes Dr. Caldwell such a great choice is her wide array of experiences from business, through all levels of academia, to working with community and governmental leaders. Her history of creating programs and establishing the metrics to measure their success so they can be made more effective, illustrates she will hit the ground running on day one,” said Mahony.

“Dr. Caldwell is another key hire as President Mahony is successfully carrying out the board’s charge to strengthen the ties between our campuses. More importantly, she will lead our work to foster a climate that not only ensures our universal commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, but says to the world that we are dedicated to fighting racism in all its forms. Besides educating our next generation of leaders, what better mission can a university have?,” said SIU System Board of Trustees Chair Phil Gilbert.

Reporting to the SIU System President, the Vice President for Antiracism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) will lead and be responsible for the operation of the newly formed Office for Antiracism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (OADEI). It will coordinate all System diversity and equity programs, non-discrimination policies and equal opportunity compliance matters, including affirmative action and Title IX. In addition, the OADEI will supervise System initiatives towards becoming an antiracist organization, including community engagement and other involvement with local social justice issues.

The CDO will work closely with each SIU campus Chancellor and their individual diversity officers to position the OADEI as a center of excellence that drives visionary change across the System’s campuses and locations in Carbondale, Edwardsville, Springfield, Alton, East St. Louis, and Grayslake. Through informed and respectful discourse, the CDO will also collaborate with system stakeholders at all levels to foster a sense of belonging within the SIU community.

“My first goal is to get to know the people and places that make up the SIU System. To listen and to learn and to coordinate with the great individuals who are currently leading diversity efforts. From there, we will collaborate and continue building on their hard work as we refine and create programs and opportunities that will match the commitment the SIU System has to fight racism and promote diversity, equity and inclusion,” said Caldwell.

