

Martínez hopes to instill 'exclusive excellence'

Spotlight On UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

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As USD's new associate vice president for diversity, Jesús Martínez is looking forward to instilling what he calls "inclusive excellence" at all levels of the university.

It's important to remember that diversity and inclusiveness are two different things, he said.

"Diversity is really much more about numbers – how many African-American or other students do you have, and then do you have the programs to bring them in ... to make sure that they are supported once they are here," Martínez said.

Inclusiveness has a much broader definition.

"It includes many different groups, and it is about making sure that all groups feel welcome throughout the university," he said.

Martínez and everyone else at the USD Office for Diversity will be involved in working to help achieve this goal, and to set a diversity inclusiveness agenda.

Once inclusive excellence really gets going, we will

have that throughout the university, and everyone will be asked to make a contribution, all the way from administrative assistants to vice presidents and deans," he said.

The work is about transforming the institution as a whole, Martínez said.

"It's about shifting the responsibility to everyone on the campus, not just this office," he said. "We're going to do our part, but there is no way we can do diversity programs for another unit. They have to do it, and we will come in and consult, support and help. Otherwise we will burn out. We're too small.

"I envision that we will start to see the different schools start their own inclusiveness projects and initiatives, looking at how they conduct business and figuring out how we can actually change a policy," he said.

Changing a policy to include something as simple as a diversity statement is an important step, he said.

"Right now, the biggest problem that we have on



most college campuses is that people just don't think about it. 'Oops, I left the disability ramp out of the building when I designed it. I didn't think about it,'" Martínez said. "A policy saying that as an architect you need to consider acces-

sibility would remind you that inclusiveness is important."

In many ways, inclusive excellence is the same as academic excellence, Martínez said.

"It is one and the same because students from rent

backgrounds bring gifts, talents, histories, experiences and worldviews in addition to academics," he said. "It's all those things taken together that we are calling inclusive excellence."

Martínez started at USD July 30, and moved into his office at the Muenster University Center about two weeks ago.

Prior to arriving in Vermillion, he worked for nine years at the University of Denver, where he was associate provost for multicultural excellence.

Since classes have begun he has started the process of reaching out to the Student Government Association and other cam-

pus organizations. He said he is most looking forward to working with the students.

Martínez said he also is looking forward to working with HR and other departments to help diversify the staff and faculty at USD.

"The goal is not really to hire an African-American, or to force the committees to hire an African-American," he said. "The goal is, can we get a diverse pool so they at least have a chance to be looked at. The problem is, we don't have diverse pools. It just depends on where you advertise, how your job description looks, how your ad looks.

"It depends on a lot of different things," he said. "You've got to go the extra mile."

The USD Office for Diversity is located in Room 143 in the Muenster University Center.

For more information, call (605) 677-3925, or e-mail diversity@usd.edu.

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