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In New Role, Professor Miller Advocates for A Just and Inclusive Community

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In a new role, Professor Miller advocates for a just and inclusive community

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What excited me about this job is the charge to help transform the culture of UB to one of a truly equitable and just community,” Miller says. “I was appointed to ensure that issues of fairness are an integral part of all management decisions at UB, and that they are carefully considered and robustly discussed at all levels of the University.”

That means, she says, making sure the custodial staff feels as much a part of the University’s mission as the professors, and treating people fairly across the spectrum of difference. For example, if the University were to begin admitting more students with physical disabilities, but failed to provide access ramps to enable them to freely move around the campuses, that would be a failure of equity.

The position was created as an outgrowth of the University’s long-term strategic plan, UB 2020. A committee established to implement the plan recommended the appointment of a senior member of UB’s senior leadership team to oversee diversity and equity issues at the university.

“Creating the conditions for inclusiveness and equity among faculty, staff and students is critical for the transformational learning environment that will ensure UB’s reputation for excellence in the highly globalized and rapidly changing 21st century,” Zukoski said in announcing Miller’s appointment. “Professor Miller’s demonstrated commitment to equity, advocacy and compassion in her work, as well as her creativity and ability to work across disciplines, make her an outstanding choice to lead, plan and coordinate UB’s equity and inclusion efforts.”

Miller has been on a “listening tour” of University units, talking with administrators about their areas of responsibilities and “trying to understand where I can enhance equity and inclusion through targeted interventions and collaborative projects.”

An advisory council of faculty, staff, students and alumni will also be created, a fact that Miller welcomes. “Often people in this role become isolated,” she says. “What we are trying to do is create more campus-wide consensus, to make sure our messages are disseminated throughout the University. A broadly representative council of people who are committed to our goals makes that more likely.”

She also draws on her experience, for example, of teaching in the DiscoverLaw program for promising undergraduates of color who are considering law school. “The Law School has piloted some innovative and effective interventions that may be useful in other units,” she says.

It is a different kind of role, but one to which she brings valuable skills. After Harvard Law, she served as a law clerk to Hon. William M. Hoeveler in the U.S. District Court in the Southern District of Florida before joining the law faculty. She has published extensively on immigration law, prison conditions and other aspects of the criminal justice system and has taught innovative, technology-assisted courses on Attica, prison conditions and criminal immigration. “I intend to continue my scholarship,” she says.

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