

Leading the Way Towards Diversity:

Dr. Dionne Jackson named VP of Diversity and Inclusion

By Greer Veon

Hendrix alumna and professor of education Dr. Dionne B. Jackson '96 was recently named the college's first Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer. Created as part of the college's 2015-2020 strategic plan, the position is aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion efforts on campus grounds.

"Since my position has been announced, there have been several opportunities that have come my way that I look forward to considering when I begin July 1," Jackson said.

The position covers many broad areas of strategic planning. For instance, Jackson will take the reins on continuing efforts to define Hendrix's mission for diversity. She will also work with institutional data to understand the ways in which Hendrix is held accountable for the diversity of students on campus. Finally, Jackson will examine mechanisms to meet the goal retention of student diversity.

But Jackson's duties will span beyond spreadsheets to collaborative work with students.

Jackson hopes to continue conversations of diversity and inclusion on campus through exploring the creation of a center of inclusive community. Feedback from students, faculty, staff and administration, and the board of trustees will factor into considerations for Hendrix's programming and training needs.

"One of [my opportunities] will be faculty development initiatives and working with the associate provost for teaching and learning, and our current provost thinking about faculty development programming that they might want me to collaborate with them on, and working with the task force for an inclusive community," Jackson said.

Jackson will also work with individuals outside of Hendrix, specifically with Hendrix's Aspire Scholars and the KIPP Delta Students. Jackson pointed out that she will explore a pre-baccalaureate program for junior high school students.

"We want to help students to become more exposed to Hendrix, and let them know that we are here as an institution," Jackson said. "That we are a fantastic liberal arts opportunity for students within the state of Arkansas, and so helping juniors to really think about Hendrix College as a place that they might consider as far as their educational choices."

Many members of the Hendrix community are excited to see Jackson taking this position for the campus, especially since Jackson has been a student, staff member, and professor at



Photo by Aditya Katke

the college. Jackson also sees her experience in these three areas of the Hendrix community as an advantage.

"As a '96 graduate of Hendrix, I vividly remember the efforts that were put forth to recruit myself and other minority students that I went to school with at Little Rock Hall High School," Jackson said. "I remember the care that [was] given to get me here."

Jackson also notes that her own life gives her a passion for this work. Not only does she consider the fact that she was a minority and first generation college student, but she also considers the future students of Hendrix.

"I have a child who's very interested as an African American male student to be a student at Hendrix," Jackson said. "And so I often think about what I would want the community to be for him."