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Pride Summit Welcome

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Pride Summit — 29 March 2014
Welcome — Jonathan D. Green

In Terence Blanchard's new opera, *Champion*, which was premiered in St. Louis last summer, the boxer, Emile Griffith, who killed his opponent Benny Parret in the ring, summarizes his tragedy with the line, "The world forgave me for killing a man, but it condemned me for loving one."

Those of us in this room have seen stunning progress in American society's inclusion, acceptance, and even celebration of our differences: differences that define us as individuals, differences that enrich us as a university and a civilization.

I am very pleased to welcome you to the first Pride Summit at Illinois Wesleyan on the theme "Identity: Who I am on the Inside and Outside." Today we will explore issues of personal, gender, racial, cultural, sexual, and professional identity.

For those of you who are returning to campus, I am happy to share some recent accomplishments relevant to this gathering and today's theme. We are nearing the adoption of a new strategic plan. The diversity section of the previous plan focused on racial and ethnic diversity, and our efforts to better reflect those aspects of the diversity of the world around us have been successful. The current first-year class includes over 100 MALANA (mixed race, Asian, Latino, African American, or Native American) students and 50 international students. The new strategic plan expands our diversity initiatives to better embrace and support differences of gender, socio-economic background, first-generation students, and sexual preference and identity.

The Safe Zone program is flourishing: Acacia recently became the first Greek organization on campus to require safe-zone training for all its members. The Pride Alliance at State Farm has generously reached out to our campus Pride Alliance to provide mentoring to our students as they think about the interplay between their personal and professional identities.

The three pillars of the university's mission are our commitments to the environment, social justice, and diversity. As Dr. King said on our campus in 1966, "We have come a long, long way, but we have a long, long way to go..." Over the subsequent 48 years, we have continued to make important progress. It is our diversity that makes us stronger as a community. As we strive to create a world in which each of us feels supported to be true to ourselves we not only provide a spirit of inclusion for each other, but we create the opportunity to celebrate the best of what we can be together.

Thank you for being here, for the many ways in which you have made this a special place, and for your work today that will help each of us to strengthen ourselves and the broader community.