November 19, 2015

Dear KU Community:

International Programs stands firmly with all those who believe diversity, equity, and respect are fundamental to the University of Kansas and to our mission and vision as an institution. We become a full community only to the extent to which we actively embrace, support and celebrate all races, ethnicities, countries of origin, religions, sexual orientations, and other identities which are core to how we define ourselves as human beings and members of a truly global community.

This week is International Education Week (IEW), our nation’s 16th year of taking time out of our busy lives to recognize the critical role education plays in bringing the world into our individual lives and us out into the world. These efforts are not important because they are transactions, but because they create critical and tangible opportunities to transform our lives and understandings, to develop a mutual appreciation and respect for one another, and to become advocates for those around us.

As we reflect on the importance of international education in our lives, we must also acknowledge the critically important work we need to do at home. International Education is about diversity, respect, the transformational power of inclusion and about equity. These, however, are not concepts distinct to international education. They speak to our humanity and dignity. They speak to the importance to all of our individual and collective inclusion in society.

In articulating the theme for IEW this year, “International Education: Advancing Access for All,” President Obama reaffirmed our campus’s call for action when he stated, “We expect that everybody gets an equal shot. We expect everybody can go as far as their dreams and hard work will take them.” We must work hard to ensure all members of the KU community are able to avail themselves of our international education opportunities on campus and beyond. Furthermore, we must go beyond welcoming our international students, scholars, and faculty to campus, and actively construct a community of inclusion and equity in which our classrooms, offices, perspectives, and lives become enriched by the diversity we each bring to the table, domestic and international alike.

KU must come together and work deliberately and diligently to ensure that all members of our community have the opportunity to thrive and see themselves in who we are as a university. International Programs stands committed to doing all it can as a partner in our transformation. Indeed, as so many have articulated in the preceding days, it is time to act together toward lasting changes that address discrimination at KU. We must not lose this moment!