TO: The People of Color Coalition
FROM: Kurt L. Schmoke, president, University of Baltimore
RE: The Petition of the People of Color Coalition at University of Baltimore
DATE: December 3, 2015

Thank you for the thoughtful approach you have taken to help make the University of Baltimore a more inclusive campus environment. UB’s administrative leaders share with our students, faculty and staff a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. I am confident that, with the active participation of the campus community, we can work together to continue ensuring that the University of Baltimore is a welcoming place for all.

As a specific step towards this shared commitment, I will add student representation to the University Culture and Diversity Committee, a standing University Committee established in 2012 by UB’s Plan of Organization for Shared Governance, and charge the group to draft a new Cultural Diversity Strategic Plan for the University of Baltimore. The plan will address campus diversity issues, including those raised in the People of Color Coalition petition, i.e., the diversity of tenure-track faculty, academic and co-curricular programming, campus climate and the student experience, and administrative staffing. A town hall meeting on diversity will be held in the spring semester as part of the Committee’s work.

The cultural diversity planning process should begin with a fact-based assessment of where UB stands regarding cultural diversity. As stated in the latest University System of Maryland Cultural Diversity progress report, we agree that UB must enhance diversity hiring, particularly of tenure and tenure-track faculty. Currently, 17.8 percent of UB’s faculty are minority. At 6.7 percent, UB’s percentage of African-American faculty slightly exceeds the national average of 6 percent, but does not as yet meet our aspirational goals.

The University has taken multiple steps to recruit more faculty of color. As a result of its annual assessment of faculty postings, the Office of Human Resources has begun to use targeted promotion to minority candidates in The Chronicle of Higher Education and HigherEdJobs. The Merrick School of Business has rejoined The PhD Project, which recognizes that increasing the supply of minority faculty depends on increasing the number of PhDs attained by people of color.

UB’s co-curricular offerings include programs that can be expanded or used as models for other student support initiatives. Examples include the Brotherhood, Mentorship, Achievement,
Leadership and Enterprise (BMALE) Academy, which provides a supportive environment for male students of color. The School of Law’s Fannie Angelos Program for Academic Excellence collaborates with the state's Historically Black Institutions to increase diversity in the legal profession. The Diversity and Culture Center developed the UB Safe Space program to make UB a welcoming environment for all members of the community, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Next week, the Office for Academic Innovation will convene a group of students, faculty and staff to participate in the Penn Summit on Responding to Racism on College and University Campuses. This collaboration between academic and student affairs can provide a foundation for further campus dialogue and cultural competency training, building on the Division of Student Affairs’ designation as one of 2014’s “30+ Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs” by the American College Personnel Association and the Center for Inclusion, Diversity and Academic Success at The Ohio State University.

The success of these and other programs can be used to enhance the campus experience for UB’s student population, which is increasingly drawn from our diverse city. In fall 2015, the top two feeder high schools for UB’s freshman class were Baltimore city public schools, as were five of the top 10 feeder schools, a pattern reflected in previous entering classes.

As the cultural diversity planning process moves forward, I encourage us all to consider diversity in broad terms, consistent with how the issue is evolving nationally. A truly diverse campus community reflects differences in ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status, religious and cultural background and sexual orientation.

Thank you for your commitment to enhancing the student experience for UB’s diverse population. I look forward to working with all constituents of our community to continue ensuring that the University of Baltimore is a welcoming, inclusive campus.