

Memo

From: President Lewis
To: Houghton University Employees and Students
Date: Friday March 10, 2023
RE: The Mosaic Multicultural Center and the Intercultural Ambassador Program

Since its creation in the spring of 2018, the Mosaic Multicultural Center has been an important aspect of Houghton University's mission to educate and support students from diverse backgrounds. The staff and students who have served in leadership in this space over the last five years have enabled many to grow in their faith, explore the richness and beauty of the diversity of God's Kingdom, and to face the hurtful realities of a fallen world where racism and hatred, manifestations of sin and evil, continue to be realities. As Houghton enters a new chapter with the development of the university's next strategic plan, we are evaluating how we can best move Houghton forward in creating a Christ-centered community, one in which students from all backgrounds and traditions live and learn together, with respect and appreciation for what all students bring to Houghton.

After much discussion with stakeholders, including students who have frequently occupied the Mosaic Center, students and staff who have been in leadership in the Center, the Diversity Committee, and others, it has become unmistakably clear that the Mosaic Center in its current form and function is no longer achieving the university's aims. As such, the Mosaic Center will close at the conclusion of this academic year and the space will be repurposed. To be clear, this is not a budget-driven decision. Houghton remains missionally committed to providing a Christ-centered, academically challenging education to students from diverse backgrounds. Through the university's strategic planning process and the Student Life strategic planning process, we are charting a path forward in which the university as a whole takes ownership for carrying out that mission.

According to the Mosaic Center's initial purpose statement, it was intended to be a dynamic space that hosted conversations, programming, and educational activities that promote issues of cultural diversity. Unfortunately, in its current form, the space makes entering into these conversations challenging for many in our community, including many students of color. Many individuals view the space as exclusive and unwelcoming, leading to the effect of few students engaging in the learning experiences the space was intended to foster. Houghton will be able to more effectively accomplish the institution's goals in this area if our goals are separated from the Mosaic Center and the physical space it now occupies.

We do intend to retain the ambassador program, renamed the Intercultural Ambassadors, with student leaders helping to provide intentional and impactful programming on campus that fosters intercultural connections and learning for all Houghton students. These students will help to plan events that celebrate heritage months, assist our MLK Day Committee with planning this signature event, and organize campus conversations. If any students are interested in serving in this capacity, please contact Vice President Smithers to complete an application.

Beginning in fall 2023, the Mosaic Center's current space in the Reinhold Campus Center will be repurposed as a Campus Ministry space. This office, led by Dean Michael Jordan, will house the work of Campus Ministries, including serving as a meeting space for Emmanuel Scholars, Life Together Groups, and a new campus-wide discipleship program.

In closing, with this change, we want to celebrate the good work of those who have served in the Mosaic Center over the past five years, acknowledge the rich connections students have made through this space, and look forward in anticipation to the work God will do through the new Campus Ministry Office and the ongoing work of our student ambassadors in helping us to fulfill our goals for fostering a loving and welcoming Christ-centered community for all students.