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interview

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"I think that society is changing. It's becoming multicultural, and we're going to need to figure out a way to get along with one another."

*Interview excerpts reported by Jenni McKinney*

**What are the core issues at ISU?**

I think what's at the heart is the fact that Iowa State, like many other places, needs to take a very good look at where it stands in terms of diversity. I think the time has come for self-evaluation and challenge to make changes in order to improve diversity at Iowa State. I think that in all the things that you think about when you think about diversity—which includes climate, which includes physically how people are placed—that one would conclude that Iowa State needs to improve.

I think there's a cry for accountability when it comes to diversity. I think, at the heart, there's a lot of pain in terms of the history—of not only Iowa State—but the state of Iowa, as well as this country, when it comes to the response towards diversity. There's a history of feeling that we have fallen quite short of where we really need to be. I don't think people would be as emotional about the subject if they felt that we were making adequate progress. I think there is a tendency to feel that progress is very slow; it's much slower than it should be. I think also, in order for change to be made, there's going to be a continued need to push the envelope. I think that we certainly can't get to the point where we become complacent about diversity. So those of us that are most affected by it are going to continue to push the envelope, continue to keep on people's minds the fact that we still have a long way to go.

I think one of the things that makes this whole process so difficult, is [the] fear element. There's lack of trust and there's fear that make things very difficult. I'm thinking about the administration when I make that statement because there is a lot of lack of trust and there is a lot of fear. It seems as if almost anything that you do is going to get scrutinized very carefully, and someone's going to find fault with it. There is going to be a lot of finger-pointing and a lot of blame. It's almost as if anything that you do is going to be seen by someone as being an attack against them. And somehow we're going to have to recognize what we're doing. I think that is the one thing that we have not dealt with very well.

**What did we learn from the Carrie Chapman Catt Hall controversy?**

I hope we have learned that we live in a society that's multicultural, and we need to think very carefully about decisions that we're making. I think we need to think about things in the context of a multicultural society and not just from a personal point of view. We need to weigh our decisions very carefully. We need to get a variety of input, and we need to respond in a proactive way, rather than a reactive way.

I think hopefully we've learned that it's much easier to look for the places of instability and try to correct those up front. We've learned that you can't ignore things and expect things to go away. Ignoring is not the answer. I hope we've learned that we need to get a variety of input when we make decisions, and we need to listen to those decisions and weigh what people are saying very carefully.

I think that society is changing. It's becoming multicultural, and we're going to need to figure out a way to get along with one another. And the way you get along with one another is not by pretending that people don't exist and that their feelings don't matter—no matter how large or small their influence may be. And at the heart of what I think is behind people's reaction to diversity—now I'm talking about oppressed groups—is the idea that they're not significant. You've got many groups that are constantly trying to get people to hear their voice and to say that we really matter—that what you're doing affects me in this way.

The reaction comes from the fact that they think that they're not being heard and that they really don't matter. That's why I try to use the word value. I think that we need to recognize the value of everyone. Value is something that is active. If you value something, it's going to show up in the way that you treat it. And when people feel mistreated, they don't feel valued.

**What should the university do now?**

I agree that people might not have understood the damage that naming that building would do to certain people. But now that they see the damage and understand the damage, then you've got to deal with that.
How could we deal with it; what should we do?

In the least, I think that people on both sides need to get together and talk out how they feel because there's something else at stake that was not there initially. What's at stake now is the fact that you had this one group, once the building was named, their reaction. But now that people are talking about taking the name off the building, you've got this [other] group that's hurt and upset. And so that's more information.

If your goal is to bridge the gap in all the ways that diversity represents, then, in the least, what you're going to do is you're not going to just do something and ignore people. And I don't really see that happening. I would love for someone to tell me where groups on opposite sides have really gotten together and had a heart-felt conversation where they just talked about how each other feels. And where others who are not as close and who don't really care as much can at least care enough to say, 'I can't understand why you feel the way you do, but what I do understand is that you do feel the way you do, and that's important to me.'

Can dialogue help ISU be a more successfully diverse campus?

Dialogue, [yes], and it has to go deeper than that. People have to come together with the intent of expressing how they feel, but at the same time, listening to how others feel and trying to identify with the way they feel. I hear people say, 'I'm not black or I'm not Asian and it's hard for me to put myself in your place.' I know a whole lot of people that are not black, that haven't had the experiences that I've had, but I think understand my experiences as well as I do. Now, why is that? I think it's because they've listened, and they've tried to understand, and they valued me as a person. They just didn't write me off, but they tried to understand.

So, to say that because you're white, you can't understand, I think is an excuse. I think we can all understand how someone feels when they're being mistreated. And, to me, that's the bottom line. We're not trying enough. It's too small a percentage of us trying. We need to get a larger percentage trying harder.

- design by Heather Hansen

Jischke Talks

Jischke also said the university has attempted to make some compromise with the September 29th movement besides changing the name, but the September 29th Movement would not accept the compromise. “Given that the only resolution the September 29th Movement will accept is the changing of the name, it is not clear to me how one would resolve [the situation].”

Jischke said it is up to the September 29th Movement as to how the issue will be resolved. Jischke said the September 29th Movement is aware of the university’s stance on the issue.

“I think it depends on them,” he said. “That is their decision to make.”

Jischke said the university would continue to support its diversity programs and its support of the Big Conference on Black Student Government.

Jischke said he is very aware of the feelings of the September 29th Movement, but also that the name of Catt Hall will not change. “Catt deserves this recognition,” Jischke said. “I am not prepared to send a resolution to the board of regents asking for the name to be changed.”