UW-Madison is committed to providing a welcoming environment that enables all students, faculty and staff to thrive. Individuals and groups from across campus have embraced this challenge and devoted significant time and energy to moving the campus forward. These efforts build on work begun through the campus Diversity Framework and its implementation plan, R.E.E.L. Change. (This document highlights several key initiatives, but is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all campus efforts.)

Here’s some of what we’ve accomplished during the fall:

- About 1,000 new students took part this fall in Our Wisconsin, a new community-building program that aims to equip students with the skills to live and work effectively as part of a diverse campus. Planning is under way to enhance and expand it for the 2017-18 academic year.
- In November, more than 8,500 students — 20 percent of our student body — completed our first-ever campus climate survey, a project called for in our Diversity Framework. Results are being analyzed this semester and by summer we’ll be discussing any following actions that these survey results might identify.
- House Fellows are receiving more in-depth training on communication, counseling, leadership and cross-cultural awareness. This began in August and will continue this spring and through 2017-18.
- University Health Services now offers expanded services thanks to two new staff members focusing on campus outreach, particularly to under-served student groups, and another who specializes in the needs of students of color.
- We appointed a Community Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from multiple local community groups. This committee has met twice this fall and is a source of advice for us on diversity issues, as well as a means to communicate campus issues and concerns back to key Madison-area groups.

A number of initiatives are moving forward over the coming spring and summer. Here are some efforts you’ll be hearing more about in the near future:

- A ceremony in February will mark the opening of the Black Cultural Center in the Red Gym. Students, staff and faculty are guiding renovations to the space and planning programming and activities. Stay tuned for more details.
- Learning Communities for Institutional Change and Excellence will expand this year, enabling a partnership with Undergraduate Advising to build our capacity for culturally responsive advising.
- We are developing expanded training for teaching assistants to help them deal more effectively with diverse classrooms. We will be rolling this out in our TA training sessions this coming summer.
- A review of ethnic studies courses is under way to ensure our current curriculum fits the mission of the ethnic studies requirement. A report and recommendations will go to the University Academic Planning Council by summer.
- The College of Letters and Sciences has redeveloped and expanded a course, Introduction to Comparative U.S. Ethnic and American Indian Studies, as a collaboration among the four ethnic/indigenous studies units. Funding from the Provost’s Office during the fall supported the redevelopment and expanded enrollment, to 144 students this spring. Through this collaboration, the course seeks to convey the full texture of the experience of people of color and Native people in the U.S. and to give students a sense of how race and ethnicity are at the center of the American experience.
- The School of Education is developing training to help faculty better engage in classroom discussions of diversity and inclusion.
- Chancellor Blank has asked all units across campus to engage in some form of discussion and training on issues of inclusion and diversity. She will ask deans and other campus leaders to report back on what their units have done over the year and what these conversations did (or didn’t) accomplish. She then hopes to challenge campus leaders to think about next steps for their units in the following year.
These actions build on steps UW-Madison has taken over the past several years that have improved recruitment and retention of students of color and expanded need-based aid. Among the outcomes that have improved:

- Over the last decade, we’ve gone from 11 percent students of color to 15 percent.
- We’ve gone from 15 percent faculty of color to nearly 20 percent.
- Our retention rate (freshmen returning for sophomore year) is now above 95 percent among both historically underrepresented students and all other students – we’ve closed the retention gap that used to exist.
- Graduation rates among all of our students have been increasing, but they are increasing faster among historically underrepresented students, which means we’ve made substantial progress on the graduation gap as well. Last spring we were cited as a university that has made some of the best progress in reducing graduation gaps.

A more campuswide approach, becoming a more welcoming and inclusive campus, requires long-term engagement in a process of self-evaluation and change. This is not something that happens easily or quickly in some cases. Like many others, we have experienced setbacks. But the depth of commitment throughout the institution gives us the strength to continue moving forward.

For more information on these efforts, visit campusclimate.wisc.edu.