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A Celebration of Diversity and Inclusion

March 2, 2022



Lindenwood's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force, in partnership with the [Center for Diversity and Inclusion \(CDI\)](#) hosted the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Award Ceremony and rededication of the CDI Ribbon Cutting Tuesday, February 22 in the Spellmann Center.

The event began with opening remarks from Lindenwood President, Dr. John Porter and then transitioned to the awards.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Awards were presented by Dr. Amanda Harrod and Mr. Myron Burr, co-chairs of the DEI Task Force. Five awards were given out to various faculty, staff, students, and community members who embody the spirit of Dr. King's work through positive impacts on the Lindenwood community.

Guests were treated to a live music performance and St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney and Lindenwood Alum, Wesley Bell was this year's keynote speaker.

Bell spoke about his experience at Lindenwood, how it set him up for success in life, and the impact of Dr. King's work. He also discussed the ongoing struggles of poverty and lack of inclusion in the country and how the criminal justice system affects those individuals.

“We cannot ignore the role that poverty and lack of inclusion plays and even in our criminal justice system and the way in which we perpetuate poverty in that system,” Bell stated. He also referenced a favorite quote, in which King said, “True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it understands that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”

Bell’s call for systemic changes was the center point of his keynote. “Not only do these practices harm individuals and families, they harm communities, they harm economic progress of our entire region. Right here in St. Louis we’ve seen these practices exposed and I want to applaud the work that is happening to reform this system,” Bell said.



After Bell spoke, Chief Diversity Officer and Director of the Center for Diversity and Inclusion Emily Pitts gave a speech on the importance, value, and impact of the new Center for Diversity and Inclusion.

Afterwards, guests moved to the CDI Ribbon Cutting event. Emily Pitts, Dr. Porter and others helped open the new CDI space. Guests were encouraged to enjoy light refreshments, mingle, and check out the new space.

The [CDI](#) promotes inclusion, fellowship and empowerment for all of the Lindenwood campus and is intended to build a more engaged inclusive environment.

“This Center for Diversity and Inclusion belongs to everyone. So, I hope you will treat it as such. Regardless of race, gender, gender identity, religion, culture, ethnicity, physical capabilities, this is going to be a place for belonging

for all,” Pitts reflected. “It’s going to be a place that anyone can come and ask questions, make suggestions, have courageous conversations, expand their networks cross-culturally, learn, and grow together. It’s going to be a place we can contribute to the journey we are all on because we are all on a journey.”

Following the event, attendees were invited to a church service in Sibley Chapel hosted by University Chaplain Rev. Dr. Nichole Torbitzky.