June 11, 2020

To the UMass Boston Campus Community,

As the executive leadership of the Division of Student Affairs, we write with outrage and deep pain for the continuing violence and injustice that is being experienced by communities of color in the United States. In the past weeks, the extrajudicial murder of George Floyd, along with numerous other reminders of discrimination, intolerance, and systemic racism, demonstrate historical flaws built into the law enforcement, justice, and health care systems of the United States. Higher education is not immune to such flaws and itself has many examples of systemic racism, oppression, and colonialism. Therefore, as a team of higher education leaders, we feel strongly that we cannot be silent on this topic, we must speak out.

Black and Brown lives matter. White supremacy has no place in a society of liberty and justice for all. Oppression and marginalization are antithetical to the principles of a public university that seeks to serve a mission for the public good.

Over the past two weeks we have been listening to our students, our teams, and other members of our community. All have rightfully demanded action. Action is a catalyst for hope, so as a leadership team for a division that is deeply tied to the student experience, the cause of social justice, and the betterment of our communities, we wish to share the following:

- We call upon all public officials to commit to a process of healing and reconciliation, instead of perpetuating a culture of violence and marginalization.
- We support the call of Mr. Floyd’s family to create a national task force that would draft legislation aimed at ending racial violence and increasing police accountability. On campus we are creating a Community Police Advisory Board to help community/police relations.
- We oppose systems that encourage and enable human rights violations.
- We commit ourselves to ongoing personal reflection to acknowledge our own privilege(s) as well as power of our positions and will carefully devise how to use these privilege(s) and power to benefit those who have been historically marginalized.
- We will continue to work to reallocate resources—and advocate for new resources—to boost services and programs that serve communities of color on campus, including resources for basic-needs support, mental health, and cultural validation as well as education.
- We will provide spaces for expression by marginalized students and for healing through programming, displays, and artistic expression.
- We will re-commit our efforts to foster a culture within and beyond our organization of restorative justice, liberation pedagogy, and open expression of self.
- We will work to educate individuals who do not share our resolution, knowing our role is to liberate minds so that they make decisions for themselves and their developing values.
- We will advocate for curricular changes to enhance student learning about historic oppression and marginalization in the United States and elsewhere in the African Diaspora.
- We will work to develop a formal Land Acknowledgement that will be utilized at our programs, meetings, and public events. It will honor the indigenous heritage of the land upon
which our campus sits and recognize the colonialist processes of past and present that have subjugated indigenous peoples.

- We will re-commit to listening to the lived experiences of students of color. We acknowledge that our own privilege may limit the depth at which our histories will have experienced their trauma, but we will seek to understand and act accordingly.
- We will soon be sharing a multi-pronged programmatic strategy to help us to do our part to bring the campus together and amplify the cause of social and racial justice.
- We will increase the frequency of staff training on anti-racism and allyship.
- We will make the status of anti-racism efforts a standing item on the agendas of all our department and unit meetings, to continue an open dialogue that creates and supports anti-racism efforts.
- We will work to honor the intersectionality of the diversity and oppression our communities experience, knowing that historic marginalization takes many forms. Therefore, our response must look to be focused as well as holistic to address specific and broad-based inequities and injustices.
- We will review and update our Transformational Blueprint and Divisional Learning Outcomes. Both documents guide our day-to-day work, and though they are imbued with social- and racial-justice principles, we believe this is the time to more expressly state these goals for our strategic direction and student learning program.
- We will develop new ways to educate our incoming students about the core values of our institution and our commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- We will continue to look for ways to improve support for staff of color, including student staff, as a staff that reflects and connects with our community is critical to our mission.
- We will aid the development of white allyship as an ongoing, sometimes difficult process of confronting one’s own privilege, that is nevertheless an important step to advance justice.
- We will re-double our efforts to partner with university areas and individuals that can help advance this declaration and support their efforts.

As higher education practitioners, educators, and scholars who are committed to social justice, we pledge our practice, our professional labors, and personal integrity to act as best we can as flawed individuals to do what we can to end systemic racism.

We welcome your input and wish you to know we are available.

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