May 30, 2020

Dear Cal Poly Community:

Right now, many of us are struggling to make meaning of the things happening in our world.

First, it was the devastation of COVID-19 and the impact the virus has had on our lives and in our communities. With time, we've been able to process, better understand and come to grips with the disease and how it has changed our day-to-day existence.

We also struggle with something else - the cumulative unnecessary deaths of so many Black individuals, most recently Ahmaud Abery in Georgia and George Floyd in Minnesota. We are filled with sadness and anger.

We urge our campus community to take time to fully consider and understand the anger, fear and judgement that individuals from underrepresented backgrounds feel every time something like this happens. These are our community members - our neighbors, friends, colleagues and more. Regardless of our racial identity, we may never fully understand what it's like to be in someone else's shoes, but acts of human kindness can help.

We have regularly heard stories from our Black students, faculty and staff about experiences they have had throughout the country and in San Luis Obispo. Many have been followed and harassed in their own communities; others denied opportunities for personal and professional advancement; and still more live with real fears about losing a loved one simply because of one's identity, as well as the future one's children will inherit. This should offend and disgust all of us, because it is so wrong and unfair and unacceptable. In a word, it is inhumane.

We as a society must do better - and not just through our words, but with meaningful action and unbreakable conviction. If you are not familiar with the scholarship in these areas, here are a few book recommendations:

- White Fragility by Robin D'Angelo
- Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria by Beverly Tatum
- White Rage by Carol Anderson
- The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander

We don't have all the answers, but we pledge to continue to work to promote racial justice in all forms. We understand many of you are distressed, so please know that we are available to talk with anyone about their feelings at this moment. We would also like to remind our students of key resources like the Counseling Center, Cross Cultural Centers, and the Dean of Students Office. Our faculty and staff can find support from our faculty-staff associations and the Employee Assistance Program through Human
Resources.

In two weeks, we will be sending more than 4,000 of you, our students, into the world with degrees - each with the intent of making society a better place. No matter where you go, we hope you will be courageous advocates for justice and a world that values everyone with equal respect, love and compassion.

In (hopes of a better) community,

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