June 4, 2020

Dear Cal Poly Community:

We are experiencing challenges at this moment in our history that are truly unprecedented. The deep and unattended wounds of long-held racism and inequality in this country have been laid bare before us as a society. While these are tumultuous and unsettling times, we should not lose sight of hope for change. We cannot create meaningful change as a society without first taking a long and painful look at where we have been and the countless black lives taken by racism and violence. That moment is now and it is important for us as individuals and as a society to fully feel the pain of this time and to recognize the many people among us who are and have been hurting, so we don't ever forget. In doing so, we start the process of committing ourselves to a day when lasting change and true healing are more than words.

As human beings, we must be better, we must improve, we must evolve. More than anything else, we are all human and each of us deserves equality as a basic and fundamental right. A healthy society cannot, does not and will not exist with systemic inequality. If we seize this moment as we should and use it as a catalyst for change, we can ensure our next generations no longer suffer the pain and indignities of our past. This is my hope for our future.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge and express my full support for our many students, faculty and staff who have chosen to participate in peaceful protest. In parts of our country, we have seen some individuals attempt to cheapen and undermine the powerful message of peaceful protestors through violence, discord and destruction. These are the enemies of progress and change, and this moment in our history is too important for voices demanding equality and justice to be minimized or discredited. The purpose of those who protest is greater than those who use violence to distract from the systemic change that is long overdue in our society. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and many other civil rights leaders have taught us, there is extraordinary strength in nonviolence - the kind of strength that can change and shape a nation.

As I close this note, I want to recognize the overwhelming stress and anxiety all of our students, faculty and staff are feeling. These are extraordinarily challenging times, but none of us is alone and we will get through it together. A lot of difficult work remains. It won't happen overnight, but I believe a new day is ahead - one that is equitable, inclusive and just for everyone.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Armstrong
President