

August 11, 2020

To: Chancellor Brian King, Los Rios Community College District
From: Los Rios Black Faculty and Staff Association
Re: Institutional Racism and Anti-Blackness in Los Rios Community College District

In institutions of higher education, Black faculty, administrators, and classified professionals have unique organizational roles and responsibilities that extend beyond our job descriptions. We serve as mentors and role models to our peers and we are generationally obligated to the success of our Black students. In addition to teaching, coaching, counseling, guiding, and nurturing Black students, we must protect our students from systems, structures, practices and persons that threaten and oppress them and deprive them of opportunity. Black faculty, administrators and classified professionals are obligated to do all we can to create more equitable and just systems. Research affirms that black and brown bodies were never intended to succeed in America's institutions (Beach, 2011) and they, most certainly were never intended to rise to positions of strength and power in institutions of higher learning. As a matter of fact, institutions of higher education like our Los Rios Colleges, are part of the systemic and oppressive linchpin that makes disempowerment and disenfranchisement insidious, perpetual, and generational.

We, as Black faculty, administrators and classified professionals in the Los Rios Community College District, are committed to doing all we can, individually and collectively, to disrupt and dismantle processes, procedures, and policies that are anti-Black and racist. However, the principle obligation for unapologetically articulating a commitment to anti-black racism and instigating and institutionalizing systemwide transformative action on systemic and structural racism must emanate and begin with the District leadership.

In support of this collective responsibility, however, we have crafted specific equity-minded institutional interventions and investments, that, if adequately resourced and broadly implemented by the District and its colleges, will result in eliminating opportunity gaps for African Americans students and cultivating a more equity-minded, anti-racist institutional climate that supports the development and advancement of Black faculty, staff, administrators and students in the four campus District. In the spirit of institutional transformation, please see the following recommendations:

Professional Development -

- Develop a Board policy that creates mandatory and periodic District wide anti-racist, implicit bias and anti-Black racism trainings for all Los Rios Community College employees
- Develop a robust equity-minded professional development training program, facilitated by content area experts like Dr. Lasana Hotep, to reinforce the District's commitment to building employees' competency and proficiency in identifying anti-Black racist behavior and conduct including the expectation that employees' will disrupt the perpetuation of systemic inequities in the exercise of their individual duties and responsibilities
 - The groups subject to the training should include but not limited to: Executive leadership and the Board of Trustees, Instruction, Student Services,

Administrative and Classified Management, participatory Governance Council structures, and all collective bargaining groups.

- Development of an online training module focused on implicit bias, racial micro aggressions and other forms of racist behavior and conduct that operate within our respective work environments
 - Participation should be mandatory, periodic, assessable and require a passing score for certification similar to the Title IX training module
- We seek the same level of organizational commitment in the area of anti-racist and anti-Black racism trainings as the District has invested in the Interest Based Approach training for conflict resolution

Faculty Performance Evaluations –

- Modify the performance review evaluation criteria to include measures for both students and peer review teams to assess faculty competency in equity-minded instruction, culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum design.
- During the performance review period, provide Equity Coaches for faculty whose course success rates show consistent equity gaps across courses for students of color.
- Work in partnership with the collective bargaining unit to modify the contract agreement to reduce the time between faculty performance reviews for faculty
- Work in partnership with the collective bargaining unit to modify the contract agreement to ensure students are able to evaluate each class every semester
- Reinforce our collective responsibility to document and respond to conduct by faculty who receive persistent and periodic student complaints within and outside of their performance review period
 - We expect that all institutional stakeholders involved in investigating students' complaints will take them seriously and conduct a thorough and equitable investigation free from implicit bias and from multiple perspectives

Staff/Management evaluations –

- Modify the management performance review evaluation criteria to include measurement of competency in their equity-minded instructional leadership, attentiveness to and support of their own and staff development of skills and strategies related to cultural competence, diversity and inclusion, and social justice in the exercise of their individual duties and responsibilities
- Modify the staff performance review evaluation criteria to include measurement of cultural competence, equity, and social justice in the exercise of their individual duties and responsibilities

Districtwide Anti-Discrimination & Other Forms of Student Complaints –

- Ensure all Equity Officers, at the campus and District levels, receive periodic professional development, specifically in the areas of implicit bias and anti-Black racism trainings, to enhance their skills and aptitude in identifying and addressing policies, practices and behaviors that unlawfully discriminate against students
- Conduct an internal audit of the duties and responsibilities of the Equity Officer, at the campus and District levels, to determine the degree to which the designee is empowered to make actionable recommendations for the remediation of discriminatory conduct by a faculty, staff and/or an administrator and the frequency in which they do so

- Create a new “Student Equity Advocate” position for each campus to provide confidential assistance, including but not limited to, serving as a resource to guide and support students claiming unlawful discriminatory conduct or unjust mistreatment by a faculty, staff and/or an administrator.
 - We expect that “retaliation against a person who files a complaint, refers a matter for investigation, participates in an investigation, or serves as an advocate for a complainant or respondent” will not be tolerated, and will be subject to the district's policies against retaliation
- Develop a centralized, transparent data-collection process and tool that tracks student grievances/complaints, suspensions and expulsions disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Curriculum –

- Support and encourage the development and expansion of equity-minded content-area syllabi district-wide that includes culturally responsive content and pedagogies that are anti-racist.
- Reinforce the District’s expectation that all campuses engage in periodic review of curricula and pedagogy for the assurance of student success and the elimination of equity gaps

Policing –

- Adopt and support the implementation of the 10-point Campaign Zero Plan presented by the Los Rios Police Department at the Board Study Session on July 8, 2020.

Institutional Report Card –

- Develop an Equity Report Card, for all campuses, that publicly displays student success data by individual course level, disaggregated by race/ethnicity

Collective Bargaining Agreements/Board Policy –

- Examine labor agreements and Board policies to form consensus for creating equity both inside and outside the classroom.

Student Support –

- Provide adequate resources for the assurance of culturally appropriate mental health care for students of color experiencing issues related to racialized trauma
- Provide adequate resources for students of color experiencing any technological issues related to remote instruction.
- Provide adequate funding for the creation of Black Student Centers, and ensure the financial sustainability of Umoja, MESA, and A2MEND chapters on every Los Rios campus.
- Provide an onboarding program that identifies support and community resources to promote persistence and retention?
- Implement more effective midterm intervention programs, processes, and technology to identify and support struggling students.

Hiring practices -

- Conduct an audit of hiring practices and policies that are hindering the District from achieving equitable outcomes in hiring of African American candidates for administrative, teaching, and classified positions

- Evaluate the degree to which anti-black bias is prevalent in the screening and interview processes and ultimately, reflected in inequitable hiring decisions
- Revise the Faculty Development Internship Program (FDIP) to ensure that applicants that successfully complete the program and apply for a full-time or part-time position in the same discipline will be screened with all other applicants and candidates are selected to interview for the position

Administrative Practices –

- Perform an audit of all Los Rios District administrative practices and policies, including but not limited to campus contracts, vendors, and business partnership practices to ensure that they are representative, inclusive and decisions are made through an equity-minded lens

These courageous and transformative actions will require a sustained commitment and resolve to disrupting the perpetuation of systemic racial inequities that are pervasive throughout the Los Rios Community College District. This is a critical juncture in our nation’s history and institutions of higher education, particularly minority serving institutions like ours, bare disproportionate responsibility in creating a more racially egalitarian, inclusive, and democratic society. It is incumbent upon us to become an anti-racist institution, working towards dismantling barriers to educational opportunity and social mobility for our Black and African American students. Ibram X. Kendi reminds us that we cannot be indifferent or dispassionate about dismantling racist ideas and practices within our organizations because “There is no such thing as a nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups” (Kendi, 2019, pg. 18).

We want to express our sincere appreciation for the preliminary actions already taken by the Board of Trustees and the executive leadership team who have begun the process of critical self-reflection and interrogation of institutional practices and policies that have hindered the development and advancement of Black faculty, staff and students. Furthermore, we support Chancellor Oakley’s Call to Action Plan including the principles articulated by the Black Lives Matter and Black Minds Matter leaders. We acknowledge that these changes will require our collective efforts and look forward to meeting with you to discuss next steps for the adoption and implementation of the proposed action steps to eliminate opportunity gaps and the cultivation of more equity-minded, anti-racist hiring, performance review, professional development and policing practices, policies and procedures. We eagerly await your response.

In Solidarity,

The Black Faculty and Staff Association of the Los Rios Community College District

cc: Los Rios Board of Trustees
cc: Los Rios College Presidents

enclosures: Campus DI Reports (or other similar documents)