

Diversity, Equity & Inclusivity

June 2, 2020

Dear Campus Community,

Our hearts go out to the grieving family, friends, and loved ones of Mr. George Floyd. His tragic death, indeed murder, was despicable and heinous. It never should have occurred. The perpetrator should face the full extent of the law, along with those who should have been responsible to intervene. This horrific event, and far too many like it in other facets of society, should cause each of us deep reflection on our values and result in a stronger commitment to meaningful action. We must be more urgent in creating meaningful progress towards true respect, deep empathy, and courageous kindness for all people. Racism is evil. Discrimination is wrong. Neither should ever occur in our college community. We have an opportunity to improve, and as a learning organization, we will.

We will create a better place at Southwest Tech for all people regardless of race, color, nationality, citizenship, age, religion, belief, disability, gender, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status, genetics, or medical history.

Here are a few of the actions we are taking immediately:

1. Connecting with students of color offering support, encouragement, and resources while seeking feedback on ways we can improve which are meaningful to them.
2. Reaching out to students in public safety programming to assist with processing their current situations and providing support for those who seek to better serve the public by upholding the noblest ideals.
3. Inviting people from our Diversity Work Group to develop a position description for a "Diversity Coordinator" to bring expertise to the college for further training and to provide additional resources to diverse student and faculty/staff populations. Despite our uncertain financial situation, we anticipate recruiting for a new position to begin as we start the fall semester with an emphasis on better serving minority populations. Yes, it is that important.
4. Analyzing the data from our student and employee campus climate diversity and inclusivity survey to determine specific opportunities for improvement in conjunction with our Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity plan as ways to deconstruct built-in biases and create a more welcoming and accepting culture of respect and inclusivity.
5. Strengthening our commitment to our Chargers Respect Pledge, which is attached, along with meaningful programming and professional expectations. Guidelines will be developed over the summer and be part of our priorities for the 2020-21 academic year and beyond.

While this is a preliminary outline of initial actions, it is admittedly inadequate if we are to accomplish our lofty, but essential, expectations of creating a place [described by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr](#) far too long ago. There is much we have to learn about being more inclusive and caring. We will strive to do our best to create a more welcoming, understanding, and respectful environment that values the infinite worth of each and every person. At times the feelings of guilt, helplessness, or inadequacy can be overwhelming. We have found, however, that there is greater power in remembering and acting on the difference we make when we serve others with genuine grace and care unfeigned.

We admire the people who peacefully demonstrate their beliefs and values and we are listening to their pleas. We recognize people of color have unique lived experiences and we commit to improving their opportunities to fully participate in “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”. We are grateful for the people in public safety positions, especially those of color during this time, who do strive to serve the public with fairness, dignity, and respect. We thank the veterans who sacrifice their lives for the very freedoms which deserve more universal access. The use of anyone’s professional power or personal influence to exercise dominion over another person for any reason is wholly unacceptable and particularly deplorable when coupled with hatred. We must overcome injustices and inequalities as an active choice based on our respect for each other as humans.

The First Amendment, which is revered and sacred, states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” The freedom to express your beliefs, opinions, or ideals is sacrosanct. Please exercise this right and let your beliefs be heard. Please commit to making the world a better place for everyone. Take an opportunity to get to know somebody who has a different background. We hope for the time when we can come together, both physically and because of our unified commitment to respectfully uphold the dignity of all individuals.

As we reopen our college after a global pandemic, may we recommit to closing the doors on hatred for other humans. May our actions align with integrity to our beliefs as we seek to better serve our students, each other, and our communities. May we be granted healing and wisdom commensurate with our sincerity in exemplifying true kindness and respect for other people as we serve them with humility, gratitude, and love.

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