

June 17, 2020

Students, faculty and staff,

Like so many people who believe in the hope and promise of American ingenuity, inclusiveness, and vitality, the John Tyler Community College administration has watched the events of the past weeks in both shock and anger.

Enough is enough. The killing of Mr. George Floyd in Minneapolis was far from the first senseless and inexcusable act against Black citizens. But our hope is that it was society's breaking point. It was certainly ours. Everyone must now accept the responsibility for change. And that includes our college community.

Tyler is committed to equity. One of our stated goals is that "we empower anyone from anywhere to be successful in their academic and professional pursuits." We still consider that a noble aspiration. In retrospect, however, we have been naïve to believe that if we help our students receive a great education, then a prosperous and rewarding life will magically unfold for them. But we are a learning organization, and that's what we've been doing intently for the past few weeks.

Now it's time that the persistent voices of outrage from Black and Brown people be joined with a chorus of voices of people of all colors, all backgrounds, and all walks of life. And we must understand that voices are powerful, but they have never been enough. Least of all now. We need substantive, enduring, and systemic changes, and John Tyler Community College is starting today with these steps:

1. We have a significant impact on law enforcement in the state. Collectively, Virginia's community colleges are among the largest educators of law enforcement and criminal justice personnel. As our Chancellor has announced, effective immediately, we are participating in the examination and reform of the curricula we use to educate students across our 23 colleges.
2. We're expanding this examination beyond criminal justice into all of our educational programs. Equity, multiculturalism, and intolerance for discrimination needs to be embedded in every discipline if we are going to effect change.
3. Diversity, empathy, and justice are values that must be reflected across our entire college community—including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and partners. We will hold one another to account. Wherever we fall short of our standard, we will work on the problem until we fix it.

Let's be clear: We've outlined only three steps. Honestly, we need 300 steps with 300 other institutions of higher learning walking with us. But it's a start. And even more importantly, it's more than conversation. These are specific and sustained actions we are committing to for the long haul.

Clear and measurable actions and the empathy created through diversity are the only ways that we are going to change outcomes...rather than repeat them.

Sincerely,

Ted

Edward "Ted" Raspiller, Ed.D.
President
John Tyler Community College