

Saturday, May 5, 2020

Dear College Community,

I woke up this morning struggling with how to feel and what to say. I am at a loss for words because of the senseless killing of not only George Floyd, but of the many black men who have preceded him and suffered similar fates. I am outraged by the recent incident in Central Park where Christian Cooper, another a black man was falsely accused of being threatening. I think of these two incidents, one a few states away, and one closer to home and I think about lived and perhaps daily experiences of young black men in our city. I think of what many of them have to navigate just to make it to our gates and through our doors. Although we are not on campus, I can see these young men in our classes, walking in the halls, and congregating in the cafeteria with their peers and I enjoy the beautiful mosaic of our diverse student body. And although they hail from different backgrounds, they share a similar purpose: educational advancement.

It is this vision, and the knowledge that I work at an institution with a community of faculty and staff who are committed to student success that I choose to embrace. These past 24 hours have reminded me of the work that we have to do to educate our students to leave this world better than they found it. I pray that those protesting the injustices that we witness all too frequently can do so safely.

As we resume classes this week, and approach the end of the academic year, please be extra vigilant in recognizing any 'trauma' that students might be experiencing. Their struggle might manifest itself in a variety of ways. They may be angry, frustrated, suffering in silence, or may feel a sense of helplessness. As educators, we can help by not only making referrals as needed, but it is our responsibility to walk with students through this moment so that they can understand the paths to structural, sustainable, and meaningful change.

President Schrader