



Associated Students of College of San Mateo

## Student Senate Regular Meeting Agenda

Monday, June 22, 2020, 2:15 p.m.

Via Zoom | Join link: <https://smccd.zoom.us/j/97235192963>

Zoom Webinar ID: 972 3519 2963

The public is invited and encouraged to attend all ASCSM Senate Meetings. All meetings are open to the public, and are accessible to those with disabilities. Start times are approximate. The public may address the Senate on non-Agenda items during the Announcements and Hearing of the Public items on the Agenda. Members of the public may participate in discussions only when recognized by the Chair.

**I. Call to Order**

**II. Swearing In**

**III. Roll Call**

**IV. Approval of the Agenda**

**V. Approval of the Minutes of Prior Meeting(s)**

**VI. Announcements and Hearing of the Public (15 minutes per topic, 3 minutes per speaker)**

At this time, members of the public may address the Senate on non-Agenda items.

**VII. Reports**

**a. Officers**

i. President	Joseph Nguyen
ii. Vice President	Dyana Huaraz
iii. Finance Director	Anthony Frangos
iv. Vice Chair	vacant
v. Secretary	Livienna Lie
vi. District Student Trustee	Jade Shonette

**b. Senators**

Including reports from ASCSM boards and committees, ASCSM task forces, College and District participatory governance committees, and reports from other boards, committees, or organizations.

**c. CSM Administration**

- i. Kim Lopez, Acting President
- ii. Mike Holtzclaw, Vice President of Instruction

**d. Advisors**

- i. Aaron Schaefer, Student Life and Leadership Manager
- ii. Fauzi Hamadeh, Student Life and Leadership Assistant

**VIII. Unfinished Business: Action, Discussion, and Information Items**

**a. Appointments – President Nguyen**

The Senate shall discuss and consider any and all appointments and/or recommended appointments to the Senate, the Advocacy Board, the Cultural Awareness Board, the Programming Board, any College and/or District participatory governance committees, and/or any other appointments that may be deemed necessary; possible action to take place.

**b. Legislative Bills – Advocacy Board Chair Guanzon**

The Senate shall discuss and consider recommendations from the Advocacy Board regarding positions on local, state, and national legislation that may have an impact on students; possible action to take place.

**c. Debrief of ASCSM Events**

The Senate shall discuss and review any recent ASCSM events; no action to take place.

**IX. New Business: Action, Discussion, and Information Items**

**a. Election of Senate Vice Chair**

The Senate shall open nominations and hold an election to select the Senate Vice Chair for the 2020-2021 academic year. Possible action to take place.

**b. Establishment of Public Relations Board as Standing Subcommittee**

The Senate shall discuss and consider the adoption of bylaws to establish the Public Relations Board as a standing subcommittee of the Student Senate. Possible action to take place.

**c. Response to Current Social and Racial Inequities**

The Senate shall discuss possible responses to the current social and racial inequities in the United States. Possible action to take place.

**d. Establishment of Task Force(s) for Response to Current Social and Racial Inequities**

The Senate shall discuss and consider establishing one or more task forces to plan and coordinate the ASCSM response to current social and racial inequities. Possible action to take place.

**e. Overview of the Role and Function of Student Government**

The Senate shall review and discuss the role and function of student government, particularly as it relates to participatory governance. No action to take place.

**X. Future Agenda Items**

At this time, members of the Senate may suggest agenda items for consideration for future meetings.

**XI. Final Announcements and Hearing of the Public (15 minutes per topic, 3 minutes per speaker)**

At this time, members of the Senate and members of the public may voice any concluding comments.

**XII. Adjournment**

## **ASCSM Oath of Office**

I, <<state your name>>, do solemnly swear to uphold the Constitution of the Associated Students of College of San Mateo. I commit myself to making fair, ethical and informed decisions about issues that affect students while keeping their best interests at heart. I will ensure an open, supportive, and welcoming environment for our students and surrounding community. Finally, I will strive to be a positive role model who leads by example, both in academic and extra-curricular programs.



Associated Students of College of San Mateo

## Student Senate Minutes (Unapproved)

Monday, June 8, 2020

Via Zoom

### CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 2:16 p.m.

### ROLL CALL

Members Present: President Joseph Nguyen; Vice President Dyana Huaraz; Finance Director Anthony Frangos; Senators Zaina Abdelrahman, Janice Cheung, Mae Ikahihifo, Suzy Ito, Jessie Liu, Anna Mahoney, Andrea Morales, Htet Naing, Andrianna Pellini, Megha Rai, Yasmine Scott, HaoNan Ye, Natalie Zamora

Advisors Present: Aaron Schaefer, Student Life and Leadership Manager; Fauzi Hamadeh, Student Life and Leadership Assistant

Others Present: Mike Holtzclaw, CSM Vice President of Instruction

### SWEARING IN

This item was tabled for the next meeting.

### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda as presented by Senator Zamora; seconded by Senator Abdelrahman. Hearing no objections, the motion carried.

### APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING(S)

None.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS AND HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

None.

Mr. Schaefer noted that CSM Vice President Instruction Mike Holtzclaw has asked to speak with the group. Given Mr. Holtzclaw's other obligations, Mr. Schaefer asked that the order of the day be suspended, and the group take up New Business Item B, Response to Current Social and Racial Inequities. Hearing no objections, the Senate took up the item.

### RESPONSE TO CURRENT SOCIAL AND RACIAL INEQUITIES

Mike Holtzclaw, CSM Vice President of Instruction, first welcomed and congratulated the new officers of the ASCSM. He discussed the how he, and most likely many others, have had multiple conversations regarding racial inequality and the shooting of George Floyd. Mr. Holtzclaw stated that these types of killings happen all too frequently in our country and he addressed the cyclical trend of outrage that then fades away until the next thing incident happens. Unfortunately, what happened with George Floyd is not new, but this time seem to be different. He mentioned that there seem to be a difference in this movement, with people moving from outrage to action. Mr. Holtzclaw mentioned that amongst the faculty and staff there has been great trauma and need for a space to have dialog. He asked the Senate for the student perspective on what is going on and what are the feelings surrounding this issue.

President Nguyen discussed the protest that have been happening and how he along with others feel that the injustices towards Black people should not be happening. He also expresses approval of Minneapolis' attempt to defund the police. Mr. Holtzclaw mentioned how this issue has gone global due to this cry of people saying, we have had enough.

Vice President Huaraz asked if CSM, like other college campuses, can work with the police department to put out a public statement. Mr. Holtzclaw brought up a conversation had with the football team, various police departments, some politicians, activists, and the sheriff's department, and how that was a good conversation addressing the deep problems there are, and how there were a lot of tough questions being asked by the students. He suggested that a conversation like that with a broader audience of students could be a good start. Mr. Schaefer stated that if we do have these conversations, they have to be honest and real.

Senator Mahoney suggested an education-based solution, where we are actively seeking out the information about these deep seeded issues and how we got where we are. Mr. Holtzclaw discussed how we all need to actively address the problem within ourselves and how everybody, no matter your skin color, needs to be participating in the conversation and in the actions towards the solution. He also asked if there are currently places for students to dialog about these topics, and how are they going overall.

Vice President Huaraz suggested adding classes to the administrative justice program in the sociology field, so these students who are becoming police are getting the education they need about these issues. Senator Morales mentioned the need and importance of listen to the stories from people if color. Mr. Holtzclaw expressed the want to assist in the ASCSM's effort to facilitate these conversations or any actions the ASCSM would like to take for the students of CSM.

Mr. Hamadeh noted that there have been many discussions about adding an Ethnic Studies requirement to the local Associates degree requirements. CSM is the only College in the District that does not include this prerequisite. While the change would have to come from the faculty, it seems like this is a good time to restart these discussions. Mr. Holtzclaw stated that it would be a big step forward to do so. He also noted that the College should be looking at fostering a culturally responsive curriculum across all disciplines. Senator Zamora expressed support for this idea and emphasized the importance in learning about the struggles of people of color.

Mr. Holtzclaw stated that ASCSM representatives on College committees have a real voice and have power in these conversations and the faculty really want to listen. He reminded the Senate that they have some real power in these situations, especially as a body that represents the student on campus. Mr. Schaefer suggested that the members of the College Cabinet and the Student Senate arrange a time to hold a joint meeting to further the discussion.

At the conclusion of this item, the Senate resumed the order of the day.

## **REPORTS**

Because this was the first meeting for the new Student Senate, Mr. Schaefer shared the purpose of reports is to allow officers or senators to report back on the various meetings they will be attending, to share important information and updates from the Boards, or provide news that the Senate may need to hear.

Vice President Huaraz expressed excitement for all the new senators and for the upcoming school year. Vice President Huaraz also noted that CSM student Hekim Tursunjan had recently passed away. He was a very involved student and he will be missed by all who knew him.

Finance Director Frangos emphasized the need to keep having conversations about what is going on in the world.

Mr. Schaefer gave a little background to who he is and stated how this year will most likely be a difficult year for the ASCSM and the advisors. Along with that, he encouraged the senate in stating that the year will be what they make of it and how this can make them stronger leaders. This year will be a learning process for both the senate and the advisors, which also means that we are going to need new and fresh ideas, especially when handling the current issues surrounding

Covid-19 and the social inequities that are going on in our society. Mr. Schaefer also mentioned the abundance of resources and departments that the senate has the option of using and or partnering with.

Mr. Hamadeh seconded much of what Mr. Schaefer and Mr. Holtzclaw have stated. He also commended the current senate for stepping up during a stressful time. He encouraged the senate in their potential impact on the school and how they are in a unique position to make the year what they put into it. Mr. Hamadeh encouraged the senate to stand up, think outside of the box, and take risks.

In order to provide the new members of the Senate a framework on how meetings are to operate, Mr. Schaefer asked that the order of the day be suspended and the group take up New Business Item A, Review of Ralph M. Brown Act and Parliamentary Procedure.

### **REVIEW OF RALPH M. BROWN ACT AND PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

Mr. Schaefer presented on the Brown Act. Because a Student Senate is mandated to exist at California Community Colleges, it has been determined that the Ralph M. Brown Act applies to those organizations. The Brown Act is a “sunshine” law that requires the Senate operate in an open and transparent way. The Brown Act also applies to standing committees, such as the Advocacy Board, Cultural Awareness Board, and Programing Board. Mr. Schaefer discussed logistics such as what constitutes a meeting and the requirements for notification and posting of agendas. He also noted that engaging in discussions about Senate business – or potential Senate business – outside of a meeting and coming to. A decision is a violation of the Brown Act. Due to Covid-19, Governor Newsom signed an Executive Order that suspended some aspects of the Brown Act in order to facilitate online meetings while maintaining transparency.

Mr. Hamadeh shared information on parliamentary procedure and Robert’s Rules of Order, which provide a framework and a common language for operating a meeting of small to medium sized groups. It is important to note that Robert’s Rules of Order are a tool and are not to be used as a way to shut down debate or discussion. The Senate employs an informal interpretation of Robert’s Rules that emphasizes the need to encourage discussion rather than adhering strictly to the rules. Mr. Hamadeh stated that the Brown Act can contradict Robert’s Rules, and in that situation the Brown Act takes precedence. Some of the need to knows Mr. Hamadeh discussed included language, who can make a motion, and other details on motioning. Some helpful tips were given regarding personal remarks, and what silence means when discussing an item.

At the conclusion of this item, the Senate resumed the order of the day.

### **APPOINTMENTS**

President Nguyen made the following appointments:

- Kyle Guanzon for Advocacy Board Chair  
Motion to approve the appointment by Senator Mahoney; seconded by Senator Abdelrahman. Hearing no objections, the motion carried.
- Mae Ikahihifo and Andrea Morales for Cultural Awareness Board Co-Chairs  
Motion to approve the appointment by Senator Abdelrahman; seconded by Senator Zamora. Hearing no objections, the motion carried.
- Jessie Liu and Natalie Zamora for Programming Board Co-Chairs  
Motion to approve the appointment by Senator Ikahihifo; seconded by Senator Mahoney. Hearing no objections, the motion carried.
- Suzy Ito and Hayden Noe for Public Relations Board Co-Chairs  
Motion to approve the appointment by Senator Liu; seconded by Senator Morales. Hearing no objections, the motion carried.

Mr. Schaefer stated that Vice Chair position is still up for election and outlined briefly what that role entails.

### **LEGISLATIVE BILLS**

There were no Legislative Bills to discuss but Mr. Schaefer did briefly discuss what this item might look like in future meetings, as well as what advocacy board does in relation to this agenda item.

### **DEBRIEF OF ASCSM EVENTS**

There were no prior ASCSM events, but Mr. Schaefer briefly discussed what this item might look like in future meetings.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF TASK FORCE(S) FOR RESPONSE TO CURRENT SOCIAL AND RACIAL INEQUITIES**

This item was tabled for the next meeting. Mr. Hamadeh suggested that member of the Senate talk to friends and classmates regarding what they are feeling and experiencing and potentially suggestions for actions, to help drive this conversation for next meeting.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT**

This item was tabled for the next meeting.

### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Swearing In
- Establishment of Task Force(s) for Response to Current Social and Racial Inequities
- Overview of the Role and Function of Student Government

### **FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND HEARING OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:55 p.m. by Senator Morales; seconded by Senator Abdelrahman. Hearing no objections, the motion carried.

Submitted by,

Livienna Lie  
ASCSM Secretary

## **Appointments**

There is no printed material related to this item.



## **Legislative Bills**

There is no printed material related to this item.

## **Debrief of ASCSM Events**

There is no printed material related to this item.

## **Election of Senate Vice Chair**

There is no printed material related to this item.

## **Bylaws DRAFT Article – Public Relations Board**

### **Section 1 Intent**

- 1.1 The Public Relations Board shall be responsible for planning, coordinating, and executing the advertising and promotion of ASCSM events, activities, services, and programs on campus, online, and as otherwise directed by the Student Senate.
- 1.2 The Public Relations Board shall coordinate with the Center for Student Life and Leadership Development on all advertising and promotions.

### **Section 2 Membership**

- 2.1 The Public Relations Board shall be comprised of at least one (1) representative from the Advocacy Board, at least one (1) representative from the Cultural Awareness Board, and at least one (1) representative from the Programming Board. The Board shall further include at least one (1) member of the Student Senate and one (1) student at-large.
  - a. The number of Senators serving on the Public Relations Board may not meet or exceed quorum of the Senate.
- 2.2 The Chair of the Public Relations Board shall be appointed, with the advice and consent of the Senate, from among the membership of the Senate by the ASCSM President.
  - a. The Chair of the Public Relations Board shall sit as an ex-officio member of the Executive Cabinet.

## **Response to Current Social and Racial Inequities**

The Senate shall discuss possible responses to the current social and racial inequities in the United States.

Possible action to take place.

As of today (June 18, 2020), College of San Mateo students have not heard directly from our administration regarding their position on the Black Lives Matter protests and the Defund the Police Movement.

#### I. CSM's Response to Students

We have heard from Cañada College on June 2nd through an email titled, "Message from Cañada College Leadership" which addresses "the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police is only the latest episode in a story that dates back centuries," emphasizes that "Black lives matter. Their lives and their names matter, as do the many others who, over generations, have been killed, often without a video recording to document their anguish. Their deaths let us know that racism is alive and well in our country. Racism touches the lives of our family, friends, our classmates, our peers, and our neighbors," and encourages solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement by arranging conversations surrounding education and institutionalized racism via Zoom.

We have heard from Skyline College on June 8th through an email titled, "'A Call to Action - Healing Space' Community Conversation on Racism - Thurs, June 11" in which they proclaimed that they "are simultaneously shocked, saddened and angry at the senseless loss of black lives at the hands of police, and also the frequent use of excessive and violent force against peaceful protestors over the last week." The administration at Skyline College presented to its students a "healing space" where community members discussed institutionalized racism in academia.

Even this is still not enough to recognize and act against racial violence within our country, our cities, our homes, and ourselves. While Skyline and Cañada College go as far to admit that there is a problem of racism—of *systematic* and *institutionalized* racism—they fail to fully realize that as colleges are systems and institutions of education, they continue to directly and actively contribute to racism and oppression; moreover, beyond the power and voices of students, beyond the power and voices of faculty, the administration should be having conversations about real and direct change and acting upon such conversations. Many students and faculty are already taking action in their own communities. The administration should be immediately and effectively changing policies and terminating contracts with those who condone racial violence, prejudice, and oppression. While it is important to listen to our diverse student body and our educated faculty, this tone-deaf request to merely "have conversations" instead of taking direct action is an unfortunate, yet accurate depiction of the privilege held by individuals with the most power within an institution. The privilege held by the administration to push the students and faculty to be progressive, while they take a back seat and avoid questioning and dismantling their own complacency within a system that has deep ties to white supremacy, fascism, and anti-blackness is truly unacceptable. As a CSM student, I urge the administration to truly reflect on their behavior, or lack thereof, in order to cultivate a safe and equitable environment for all students, staff, and faculty, especially for Black students, staff, and faculty.

Beyond the failures of Skyline and Cañada, CSM's response to current events has been abysmal. The only acknowledgement of Black Lives Matter that CSM students received is an email from CSM Community Relations and Marketing sent on June 3rd which states that "this is

a difficult time. Our country is facing monumental challenges that have been festering for centuries. Racism, inequality, and injustice have been brought to the forefront of our national consciousness right in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. Many of us are feeling powerful emotions that may lead to stress, anxiety and/or depression," followed by a few resources for students to access counseling, therapy, and psychiatry services. The statement concludes with "please take care of yourself and each other."

I find this response infuriating, disgusting, and deplorable. CSM's response makes it seem like students are given a choice on whether to feel the emotional and mental tolls of systemic racism. CSM's response makes it seem like, as individuals, we are solely responsible to take action to alleviate these "emotions that may lead to stress, anxiety and/or depression." CSM's response makes it seem like the only negative effect that racism has on our community is a damaged psyche. It is horrifying that an institution's response to the trauma and terror of centuries of systematic oppression can be summed up as: get some help. The administration is yet again revealing that they do not think they are part of the problem.

To the all administration at the College of San Mateo who has allowed this response to be sent to students, who has allowed themselves to perpetuate racism, who has allowed their ignorance to condone white supremacy and police brutality: *you need to get some help*. While resources for mental health are often crucial and necessary in our community, the professional help that mental health professionals, therapists, and psychiatrists that CSM offered during these times feels like a flimsy bandaid on the still-bleeding gash of centuries of historic oppression and violence. I urge the administration to educate themselves on this history and act accordingly.

## II. CSM Condoning Police Brutality by Working with Local Law Enforcement

The San Mateo Community College District's statement in the San Mateo County Community College District Department of Public Safety Policy Manual, the district highlights their ties to local law enforcement.

### **827.2 NOTIFICATION**

The San Mateo County Community College District Public Safety Department maintains a close working relationship with the Local Law Enforcement. The San Mateo County Community College District Public Safety Department occasionally works with other law enforcement agencies, including San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, Redwood City Police Department, San Mateo Police Department, and San Bruno Police Department. Meetings may be held between the leaders of these agencies on both a formal and informal basis. The San Mateo County Community College District Public Safety Department and San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, Redwood City Police Department, San Mateo Police Department, and San Bruno Police Department communicate regularly on the scene of incidents that occur in and around the campus area. When incidents arise that require joint investigative efforts, resources, crime related reports and exchanges of information, the San Mateo County Community College District Public Safety Department will work closely with San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, Redwood City Police Department, San Mateo Police Department, and San Bruno Police Department. There is a written memorandum of understanding between the San Mateo County Community College District Public Safety Department and San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, Redwood City Police Department, San Mateo Police Department, and San Bruno Police Department.

Within the departments listed, one that stands out to me in the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. On October 3rd, 2018, San Mateo County Sheriff deputies John DeMartini, Alyssa Lorenzatti, Joshua Wang, Bryan Watt and Sgt. David Weidner tasered Chinedu Okobi to death for allegedly jay walking on El Camino Real in the City of Millbrae. Okobi was born and raised in the Bay Area and was a Morehouse College graduate. He was a father, a son, a poet, and a person living their day-to-day life. San Mateo County Sheriff deputies needlessly took his life away from him, forcefully tackling him while *he was walking on a sidewalk*. No one has faced criminal charges for the murder of Chinedu Okobi as San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe believed that the actions of the deputies were reasonable. Between Okobi and the San Mateo County Sheriff deputies, the obvious and only criminals are the latter, and yet they remain uncharged for their needless violence. This only furthers the point that law enforcement and the justice system work together to continue to criminalize and brutalize black individuals such as Chinedu, perpetuating and maintaining the centuries old system of white supremacy which was established from the Transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery. Police brutality and racial violence are not some abstract concept to be conversated and debated—all Black people must confront this very real and very dangerous threat—and working with the police makes one complicit in the behavior exemplified by San Mateo County Sheriff deputies John DeMartini, Alyssa Lorenzatti, Joshua Wang, Bryan Watt, Sgt. David Weidner, District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe and other parties involved that allowed them to get away with senseless murder.

CSM also claims to work closely with the San Mateo Police Department. A youth-led organization, Coalition Z, held a Black Lives Matter protest on June 3rd. With a turnout of over 2,000 individuals, attendees marched from San Mateo City Hall to the front steps of the San Mateo Police Department. When protesters were marching in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, as the demonstrations neared its end, the San Mateo Police responded in an aggressive manner, donning riot gear and carrying zip-tie handcuffs, batons, tear gas launchers, and rubber bullet guns. Not only were the protesters ordinary citizens, but many of them were also students of CSM and our sister colleges. These students have either experienced the horrors of police brutality firsthand or have decided to act in solidarity for their friends, family, and peers, making the decision to take a stand against racism. As administrators at CSM who are obliged to uphold and support the statements of the San Mateo County Community College District Department of Public Safety Policy Manual, do you also uphold its declaration of "maintain[ing] a close working relationship with the Local Law Enforcement?" If you truly believe that your work as administrators will benefit the students on campus, why not disavow this statement and be vocal, active, and effective in your stance for supporting Black lives?

The San Mateo County Sheriff deputies murdered an unarmed, innocent Black man in Millbrae with no repercussions because of the color of his skin. The San Mateo Police displayed their narrow capacity for empathy by responding with the potential for violence when their efforts to uphold racist systems and institutions and their tolerance for the violence against Black people was challenged. This is the true nature of the police force. This is the true nature of white supremacy. This is the true nature of a fascist surveillance state.



Will you stand and work with those who experienced fear, anger, and pain at the hands of local law enforcement and law enforcement worldwide? Or do you cower behind the safety of tasers and rubber bullet guns, averting your eyes from the reality of American society as long as you feel that your prestige, power, and property is protected?

- III. CSM and CARES, the "huddle" between police and student athletes led by the football coaches and head of police departments in the area, and personal experiences of CSM students with campus public safety shows that CSM condones police involvement in the daily lives of students
  - A. Problematic nature of CARES
  - B. Unnecessary involvement of police into student's life with huddle
  - C. Personal experiences of students with CSM public safety and/or the police
  
- IV. CSM's Excessive Use of Public Safety and What They Can Do Instead

San Mateo County Community College District Department of Public Safety Policy Manual states the following:

**Public Safety officers patrol the campuses of Cañada College, the College of San Mateo and Skyline College 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.**

I find this statement concerning and frustrating as I can only imagine the cost and time it takes to maintain such a comprehensive system of surveillance while

I suggest that the SMCCD

- 1. Require transparency on how school funds were previously used towards public safety
  - a) Defund and eliminate the police from our campuses and openly condemn them for their actions
  - b) Reallocate school funds to cultivate a stronger community
- 2. Ensure that our campuses are fair, just, inclusive, and safe for current Black faculty
  - a) Hire more Black faculty
- 3. Take a stance for anti-racism
  - a) Require students to be informed in antiracism and abolitionist theory and rhetoric

Dear, friends:

I have been struggling lately. It sometimes feels hopeless for Black peoples, and especially Black males, in this country. I know it is not, and that we cannot lose hope; but sometimes it is hard. Anyway, I need to get my thoughts on paper. They are still somewhat inchoate and maybe even desultory in spots, but I think that there are valid (and potentially illuminating) points to be found herein. I hope. Thanks for hearing me out. And I know that this is long; so, I will not be offended if folks never actually get to reading the whole letter.

I have been thinking a lot about the abject disregard for Black life in this country. This is not new, of course. Anti-blackness is a tale as old as time. Black lives do not seem to matter all that much in this country as evidenced, time and again, by recent events (that have a much deeper socio-historical context). COVID-19 is making plain what many Black peoples have known all along: We are on the periphery. This pandemic is causing widespread suffering. However, not everyone is experiencing the same level of suffering.

For poor Black peoples, their preexisting suffering is being exacerbated. We have been purposefully and intentionally minoritized. Obviously, this is nothing new. In our not-too-distant past, police officers, Klansmen, and seemingly any white male with the notion could kill a black man with impunity. Lynching was a celebrated spectacle in the Jim Crow South. Ahmed Aubrey was lynched in 2020. The mechanism that prematurely took his life was not a rope, but a shotgun. Nevertheless, he was lynched by a lynch mob for a midday jog. George Floyd was murdered. His life was slowly and sadistically excised from his body by a police officer's prideful insistence on being recognized as an authority figure. Sandra Bland was murdered. Oscar Grant was murdered. Emmet Till was murdered. Sean Bell, John Crawford, Yvonne Smallwood, Bothem Jean, Atatiana Jefferson, Jordan Edwards, Stephon Clark, Breanna Taylor—the list goes on and on. These beautiful Black people had their lives snuffed out prematurely at the hands of White Supremacy. Many of their murders went viral. Ahmed Aubrey's lynching went viral, too, because of this country's perverse fetishization with and of Black suffering. The same is true of George Floyd's murder. This is not new. The internet is a new medium, but the depravity is as old as this country.

Castrated and eviscerated black men were put on postcards that were sent to family members as some type of commemoration for these psychopathic and sickening events. White families would have picnics at the sites of black men hanging. They would bring their children to these depraved events to see these disgusting displays firsthand. And, irrespective of the purported circumstances that led to these murders, it was commonsensical that the homicide was justifiable precisely because Black peoples were disallowed to make any claims for their intrinsic human rights.

As an uncle to several African-American boys, a father to five African-American boys, and unofficial mentor to many African-American boys, this really hits home for me. I feel as though I have not really been able to move, psychologically, which then has manifested itself physically in some respects. I feel as though I am in some type of stasis due in large part to shock. Because no matter how hard I try I cannot stop reading the posts of people who, in many cases unbeknownst to them, spew hate and disregard for the lives of African-American males. It's as though we are still only 3/5ths human in their eyes ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-Fifths\\_Compromise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-Fifths_Compromise)). I cannot explain my morbid fascination with reading these threads, but the things that come out are so very sickening. I would like to believe I am looking for some scintilla of hope; some instances where my European American brothers and sisters open themselves up to speak up against the atrocities that are being visited upon our young men and women. So far, those instances are rare.

In these threads, the word "thug" has become synonymous with African-American male. There is no discernible difference in either word's usage by many of the people who comment on these threads. For them, the two words seem to be interchangeable. This, of course, is an issue of framing. During slavery, the Negro was depicted as a happy-go-lucky pickaninny, who, was wholly reliant on the slave master to provide for him this was a justification for the peculiar institution of American chattel slavery. This image changed during Jim Crow: the happy-go-lucky Negro was transmogrified into the black brute (as a new justification for the abject violence that was visited upon African-Americans by whites, and a justification for segregation). This is illustrated by the willful discursive shift from the term Negro to that of the dreaded n-word. No longer was the Negro a peaceful, God-fearing oaf akin to some semblance of a farm animal; instead, he became a rapacious, licentious n-word who was only interested in defiling the "virginal" white woman. This is the imagery, with the requisite caricature that has won the day here in 2020. And, because of this, African-American males have been permanently positioned as a threat; and, in many instances reactions to them are based on this positioning. Homicide becomes justifiable when one feels as though their life is in danger and that there is no way to avoid bodily injury. This is especially true when law enforcement is accused of wrongdoing. That is to say, "justifiable" homicide requires far less justification when Black peoples are the victims.

So, then, it follows that if people have been led to believe that African-American peoples, and perhaps especially African-American males, are threats irrespective of who they are individually. This is the result of the masses having been coerced into believing, over many years, that all African-American males are threats. This is not only true of police officers, this is also true of the people who would serve as jurors on a potential grand jury or any case that brings charges against an officer who has been charged with violating Black peoples' civil rights. Unfortunately, an officer or even a civilian vigilante would simply need to say that he or she felt

as though their life was in danger, which is what precipitated their extreme force. We are seeing this now with Ahmed Aubrey who was chased, and ultimately gunned down, on February 23rd, 2020, by two white men—one of which is a former Law Enforcement Officer—while on a midday jog. They followed him in their trucks, accosted him—then claimed they shot him when he became combative. Recently surfaced video challenges their account of the story. Clearly we cannot hear Mr. Arbery's account because he has been permanently silenced at the age of 25. Nevertheless, neither murderer has been arrested. And, the sad reality is for many Americans, this makes perfect sense. These are viewed as instances of justifiable homicide precisely because African-American males have been positioned as a threat, irrespective of who they are individually. Now to be clear, this is not a recrimination of police. Most police officers, white police officers, do not kill unarmed African-American males. That is not something to be applauded, mind you—but it is true. The fact that this statement needs to be uttered, or in this case written down, speaks volumes. But, I'm of the opinion that instances of police shooting unarmed African American males like Michael Brown and Tamir Rice (a twelve-year old child, playing with a toy gun) is informed by both the non-conscious and conscious (erroneous) conflation of African American male and threats. This problematic (and patently false) association on the one hand informs police officers interactions with African American males and, simultaneously, supersedes any one interaction between white police officers and African American males. That is to say, the idea that all African American males are threats and must be subdued is present whether a particular African American male is in fact a threat.

Back to this idea of threat, the most telling part of it to me is that this only works one way. An African-American male, I do not believe, would be able to say that he killed a white man out of fear, based on the real history of atrocities visited upon him by European Americans in this country. This just would not hold up. But this is essentially the primary thesis that supports arguments around justifiable homicide in relation to purported fear-based murders of Black males by European American police officers (and in far too many cases, citizens as well).

Switching gears, oftentimes conversations around the killing of unarmed African-American males by people by white men especially by white male police officers, comes up questions around fratricidal violence within the black community, i.e., black on black violence, are brought to the fore. This is, undoubtedly, an exigent matter. Rates of black on black violence are heartbreakingly high. This is not due to some intrinsic criminality, some innate disregard for lawfulness by African-American males. In my opinion, it has much more to do with the lack of opportunity for well-paying jobs, academic success, access to health and wellness resources, and the negative effects of pernicious stereotyping. And what is routinely left out of these conversations is that fratricidal violence is not the exclusive domain of African-American males. The greatest threat to white males as far as murder is concerned is other white males; this is also true of Brown males. And violent crime is not related to innate, intrinsic criminality.

According to Michelle Alexander, when controlled for joblessness, the rate of violent crime between Black and European American men is nearly identical. (Here's a fiery yet elucidating article on this: <http://m.dailykos.com/story/2014/08/22/1323898/--But-What-about-Black-on-Black-Crime-is-not-a-valid-answer-to-Ferguson-or-Anything.>)

I am not trying to be dismissive when it comes to conversations around fratricidal violence within the black community. A loss of life is tragic no matter who the perpetrator is. This is especially true when the lives that are prematurely snuffed out are of preteens and teenagers who irrespective of whatever mistakes they've made are disallowed the opportunity to learn from them and move on to become more reflective and more thoughtful people as a result. The conversation is decontextualized. For whatever reason, there seems to be a large segment of posters who are unable to see the situation as a microcosm for a much larger, macro level problem that is predicated on structural and institutionalized racist practices in this country. Instead, a large swath of posters seem to feel as though you can speak about this matter in a vacuum, so to speak. For the outrage around Michael Brown's murder, for example, to be understood, there needs to be an authentic conversation around the larger socio-historical, sociopolitical context that exists, and that this tragedy, this atrocity, is situated within.

African-American males are not allowed to make mistakes. I have been alive long enough to know that young people make mistakes. (I know that I made plenty.) Much of my professional life is spent working with young people (specifically, African-American males), and here's what I figured out: sometimes preteens and teenagers, and even young men do things without weighing the implications or possible consequences of their actions. And while many people are aware of this, it seems as though African-American males are not afforded the same benefit of the doubt that non-African-American males are. This is not only true of racialized violence. This is true of what is taking place vis-à-vis COVID-19. There is an acceptable amount of suffering that can take place so long as it is limited to Black peoples. Where is the outrage about what the disproportional COVID-19 infection and mortality data spell out plainly regarding the Black community (<https://newsone.com/playlist/brian-kemp-slammed-genocide-covid-19-stats-black-people/>).

Now, this brings me to the point that I believe I am trying to make, I think. I am hurting for our young men and women. This pandemic, COVID-19 that is, is another source of hurt, of trauma. As you all know well, we are in an unprecedented time filled with, seemingly, ever-increasing uncertainty. However, unfortunately, there are some things that we can be certain of. The equity gaps that poor ethnoracially minoritized students of color (PERMSC) are forced to navigate, have been exacerbated by this pandemic. The disparities in health outcomes for Black peoples, for example, are enough to throw even the most promising semester into turmoil. What is more, based on a survey conducted in 2018, (with more than 40,000 student

respondents from 57 community colleges), 62 percent of Black students experience pernicious and constant food insecurities. Thirty-two percent of these students also faced housing insecurities. Chronic hunger can and does stultify even the brightest of minds. Couple this with the reality that many of these students are being forced to navigate an altogether new (and unprecedented) educational environment. And, as if this was not trying enough, many of these students are endeavoring to reach their fullest academic potential while they are disproportionately sick, hungry, homeless, and suffering through the loss of loved ones. COVID-19 is bad, but it is much worse for our DI students because of preexisting societal and educational inequity.

Anyway, in conclusion, I will say this: Black students are disproportionately unemployed. This was true prior to COVID-19; it will only be exacerbated in light of the shuttering of many of the jobs that employed Black as well as other DI students. The loss of loved ones, of guardians, of caretakers—because Black peoples and other DI groups are dying disproportionately from this sinister virus—ensures that these students will come back to school with trauma long after COVID-19 has been stamped out. If we are truly invested in educational equity, we must function as unrelenting advocates for Black (and other DI) students. Because even if we could snap our fingers and go back to pre-COVID-19 normal, that normal is still inequitable for Black peoples and other PERMSCs. Because in the midst of Pandemic-induced disproportionate negative health outcomes, we still have to worry about whether or not we will be perceived as a threat and, therefore, treated as some “thing” that needs to be neutralized.

Still, I am hopeful. I am blessed to work with you all. We can make a change. In order to move forward, we need to be willing to have real, authentic, generative and potentially transformative conversations with people of all walks of life who are interested in talking about the issues that this and other tragedies like Ahmed Aubrey, Bothem Jean, and Michael Brown’s (to name a few) murders have brought to bear. And we must figure out how to open our hearts so that we can have real, authentic conversations about why Black peoples are dying disproportionately from COVID-19. Poverty is a comorbidity. Hopelessness is a comorbidity. Joblessness, a lack of access to adequate health care, air pollution, water that is filled with lead—these are all comorbidities. If we are honest, being Black and poor in this country has been allowed to function as a comorbidity. What are we going to do about it?

In Solidarity,

Jeremiah J. Sims

**Establishment of Task Force(s) for Response to  
Current Social and Racial Inequities**

There is no printed material related to this item.

## **Overview of the Role and Function of Student Government**

Information regarding this item will be shared at the meeting.