



The State University
of New York

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Anne Kress, President, Monroe Community College

FROM: Carlos N. Medina, Vice Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer

CC: Johanna Duncan-Poitier, Sr. Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges and the Education Pipeline
Grace Wang, Interim Provost and Sr. Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development

DATE: October 25, 2017

At the request of President Anne Kress and Sr. Vice Chancellor Johanna Duncan-Poitier, I made a site visit to Monroe Community College (MCC), as a result of an incident involving a “Hate Speech” tweet. The tweet went viral, setting off a firestorm of concern and awakening deep feelings of pain, discomfort and anxiety, as well as a sense of further marginalization by the underrepresented minority community (URM) on campus. My visit began on Monday, October 16th and ended on Wednesday, October 18th, with an exit interview with President Kress and part-time Chief Diversity Officer Lloyd Holmes.

The purpose of the site visit was to lend SUNY System support to MCC by listening to a wide range of concerns by faculty, staff and students, with a view towards developing a set of recommendations to improve overall campus climate and representation. It’s important to express my gratitude to the entire MCC community and President Kress for their willingness to meet with me and share their concerns and perspectives in a genuine and collegial manner given this highly charged incident. The passion, commitment and care shown by all, including students, was admirable under the circumstances.

Given the broad scope of issues that were reported beyond the hate speech tweet, the following recommendations for review and consideration are intended to be comprehensive and thereby address campus climate, representation and communication. Please note that some of the recommendations will overlap with those submitted by faculty, staff and students.

To Learn
To Search
To Serve

the POWER of 

Human Resources

1. Serious consideration should be given to hiring a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) on a full-time basis. The SUNY Board of Trustees Policy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has made this a requirement for all SUNY institutions and therefore should be seen as a priority, especially given the demographic population of the student body at MCC. This individual will play a critical role in serving as a catalyst to move diversity and inclusivity across all sectors of the MCC community.
2. Reconstitute the Diversity Advisory Council and give it a new charge. This group of faculty and staff should work collaboratively with the CDO in examining the retention, tenure and promotion processes for every department at MCC with an eye towards ensuring equity and cultural competency.
3. Ensure diversity on all search committees. There is a body of research that shows if you want to improve diverse hires, it starts with having a diverse search committee. It is critically important when a search is being conducted for new faculty and staff positions that, to the extent possible, there are members from ALANA (African, Latino, Asian and Native American) on the committee.
4. Create a faculty and staff mentor program. Again, research has shown that mentors for junior faculty and staff have a bottom-line impact on retention and promotion.
5. Create a crisis management team. Made up of key personnel knowledgeable of MCC's culture and community, this group will help advise the President on responding in times of crises. The group should meet on a cyclical basis throughout the year, with the intent of keeping each other updated on critical issues and discuss possible interventions, if the need was ever to arise.

Education and Professional Development

1. Based on the number of concerns expressed by many regarding the frequency of micro-aggressions experienced by students and in some cases faculty and staff of color, there needs to be mandatory cultural competency education, especially for new hires.
2. Institute a "Critical Dialogues" series of talks throughout the academic year on hot button issues, on both the Brighton and DC campuses. This will help raise awareness and understanding on issues that tend to polarize people.

Education and Professional Development (cont'd)

3. Have educational workshops on various diversity, equity and inclusion topics throughout the year.
4. Conduct a Campus Climate Survey that is widely distributed. This will give you a baseline measure on where the campus really is relative to diversity and inclusion.
5. There is a perception that the DC campus is viewed as the “Ghetto Campus” at MCC, which serves a predominantly Black and Latino population of students. This perception does a tremendous disservice to the hard working and loyal faculty and staff dedicated to making a difference, not to mention students and the negative impact it has on their self-efficacy. This perception should not be tolerated, and a concerted and systemic effort needs to be made to change this view. Education and branding that increases the pride of MCC, in its entirety, needs to be undertaken.

Student-Based Initiatives

1. During times of crisis, there should be counselors available who are trained in cross-cultural understanding and be supportive of students experiencing isolation, marginalization and fear for their safety.
2. Have more activities and events that reflect URM students and the contributions of diverse cultures and people throughout the year, including LGBTQ.
3. Increase ways to bring faculty and students together to debunk myths about students of color. There’s an underlying sentiment that URM students are all in a remedial program and will not be retained due to high attrition rates; that they are incapable of pursuing STEM programs and are best suited for programs that require the least amount of math, science, and technology requirements. Unfortunately, this is indicative of a culture that is rooted in racist views and further exacerbated by both explicit and implicit bias, continuing to marginalize these students.

Other Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Efforts

1. The 18-point plan that was developed to address issues of recruitment and professional development relative to diversity should be revisited and look to

Other Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Efforts (cont'd)

- involve a larger cross-section of the campus, thereby creating a more comprehensive plan reflective of the collaborative effort.
2. Increase support for the existing Violence Prevention Program which promises to be a best practice.
 3. In light of all the issues brought forward during this three-day visit, please revisit MCC's "Strategic Diversity Plan" and make adjustments where needed.