



October 27, 2017

An Open Letter to the College Community:

Prior to the racist tweet that further divided the College community, much work had already begun to address systemic inequalities and institutional racism. For example, Joan Moorehead facilitated a Faculty Association roundtable for ALANA (African, Latino, Asian, Native American) faculty and staff. Melany Silas organized a Professional Development series this summer co-sponsored by the African American Affinity Group (3AG), the LGBTQ Affinity Group, and Title IX representatives where the focus was on the experiences of ALANA faculty. Additionally, Tokeya C. Graham has been assigned to restructure the Alice H. Young Internship program. These are just a few examples of the ways that ALANA faculty and staff have been invested in the labor of changing the College climate. We could share numerous other examples.

In regard to the tweet, many of our colleagues have focused on free speech and First Amendment protections while our constituency was deeply wounded by the vitriolic, hate-filled language in the social media post. Since then, many of us have been fraught with emotion ranging from feeling disrespected to being overcome with anger and hurt. Although the tweet was the catalyst for a coming together of sorts, we had already begun finding community in our shared historical trauma as we recounted the racism that many of us, the African American faculty and staff, have encountered at the College.

Prior to this time, many of us sat alone in our pain, afraid to speak up, knowing full well that there have been and will be repercussions to voicing our daily struggles. We shared stories and even some tears as we each recounted the microaggressions and blatant disrespect that we face. The student tweet, however, led to two key decisions by us as a collective group: 1. to break our silence, and 2. to reveal our common experiences so that we can reclaim our power as equally qualified professionals who deserve a respectful environment that values civility. We knew that we must speak up, not just for ourselves, but for our ALANA students as well, the students who come to our offices to tell of their experiences, some that mirror our own.

In response to the College-wide call for open dialogue, members of the African American Affinity Group (3AG) met with Dr. Carlos Medina, Chief Diversity Officer of SUNY, and with Dr. Anne Kress. Our voices were heard by both Dr. Medina and Dr. Kress, but it is our hope that our

College community will rise up to create a more inclusive and equitable climate that fosters respect and civility, bringing to life a core value of the College: *MCC values inclusiveness. We create an institutional culture that ensures fair and equal access for all, promotes our differences as opportunities and strengths; and cultivates respect among our employees, learners, and community members.* We must not merely SPEAK of the importance of inclusion; as a College we must LIVE this value at ALL levels and within ALL governance bodies at MCC.

In our aim to facilitate progress, we have developed this comprehensive list that outlines ways we believe the College community can come together to bring about positive change at every level of the institution:

1. Appoint ALANA faculty and staff to every hiring/search committee.
2. Hire more ALANA faculty and staff.
3. Review Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) processes for every department to ensure equity and cultural competency.
4. Address ALANA faculty and staff concerns of discrimination, racism, and other issues of mistreatment in ways that are fair, consistent, and respectful.
5. Implement a mentoring program for all new ALANA employees.
6. Establish a clear advancement track for ALANA professional staff.
7. Create College-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Certification.
8. Develop mandatory Cultural Competency and Intelligence training for all new and current faculty and staff.
9. Hire a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion or Chief Diversity Officer as its own separate position. Additionally, hire a Diversity Recruitment Officer to recruit, hire, and retain ALANA faculty and staff.
10. Organize External and Internal Review Group to ensure that DEI policies are adhered to.
11. Support external Professional Development opportunities on DEI for faculty and staff.

12. Outline clear Human Resources policies and procedures that include DEI in the language.
13. Reinvest in the Dr. Alice Holloway Young Internship Program to create opportunities to hire more ALANA faculty and staff.
14. Offer release time and other incentives to support DEI initiatives.
15. Develop a Multi-Cultural Center at the Downtown Campus to create spaces for community building.
16. Include students in DEI conversations.
17. Devise Communication and Reporting System.
18. Increase DEI activities at the Department level.
19. Support programs and initiatives that are targeted to ALANA students.
20. Make DEI part of the curriculum in every academic area.
21. Encourage Department Chairs to focus on DEI initiatives at meetings.
22. Self-reflect and challenge yourself to work on building a more equitable and inclusive environment.

In submitting this letter, 3AG is allowing the College community an opportunity to bear witness to our experiences. Our suggestions should not be used to further divide the College or to penalize Black faculty and staff. The goal is unification, not division. This is not easy work, but it is necessary. We must create a College that adheres to our Mission, Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan. Change starts today.

Respectfully Submitted,

The African American Affinity Group (3AG)