

RISING SCHOLARS NETWORK CALL TO ACTION

June 5, 2020

CALL TO ACTION IN SUPPORT OF OUR BLACK STUDENTS, STAFF, FACULTY, STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES

We are part of the California Community College Rising Scholars network, a network of community colleges serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students. Our colleges serve more than 10,000 students incarcerated in prisons and jails, and more than 50 of our colleges have support programs, student clubs, and networks for formerly incarcerated students. While the recent events in our nation, including the murder of George Floyd and subsequent public uprisings, may only now be striking outrage in some, many of our Black students, colleagues, friends, and families have been terrorized by systemic racism their entire lives. It is time that we explicitly commit to racial justice and articulate a plan for change.

As racially diverse professionals, some of us have directly experienced systemic racism, while others have benefitted from privilege that shields us from racism. Together, we affirm that racism is embedded in our nation, including in our criminal justice and educational systems. We affirm that racism is not new and that in order to achieve meaningful change we all must join the struggle. We honor the efforts of the advocates and organizers whose work has gotten us this far, and we mourn for those whose lives were violently stolen.

We know that the criminal justice system is rooted in and perpetuates racism, and our students have carried this burden for too long. We commit to fighting for anti-racist and liberation-based pedagogies and practices in our work with carceral impacted students. We call upon our fellow faculty, staff, and administrators in the Rising Scholars network to move beyond words and take action. This includes:

- Implementing racial diversity in hiring, including hiring faculty, staff, students and administrators with lived criminal justice experience
- Expanding outreach and support for Black incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students even as we enter a recession
- Pushing ourselves to provide the highest quality culturally responsive classroom experience and maximum student supports for our incarcerated students
- Being vocal in our support for formerly incarcerated students and elevating the needs of Black students on campus as we engage with the campus community
- Seeking out and responding to the voices of our Black incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students and hearing their feedback not as criticism but as opportunity for change
- Consistently and repeatedly taking advantage of opportunities for action

Now is the time. Destiny is urging us to unite, to listen to our Black colleagues and students, to prioritize their voices in our conversations, and to demonstrate to our white colleagues and students how they can leverage their privilege and power to dismantle the pervasive systems of racism for the sake of uplifting our diverse community, for the sake of Humanity itself. We are faculty members, staff and administrators from across the state and today we stand united as a network committed to supporting and uplifting our Black students and colleagues.

Will you join us?

Edwin Hodges
EOPS Program Coordinator
Allan Hancock College

Kalinda Jones
Faculty
Folsom Lake College

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