

New Jersey Presidents' Council

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NJ HIGHER EDUCATION STATEMENT ON COMBATING SYSTEMIC RACISM AND FOSTERING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

NEWARK - In a display of our unwavering solidarity, all private, public, and community colleges and universities of New Jersey, and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education share space today to comment on the latest display of our country's horrific legacy of racism and violence against Black individuals.

With New Jersey being more racially diverse than the rest of the nation, our higher education institutions rank among the most diverse in the country, and many hold the designations of Minority Serving Institution, Hispanic Serving Institution, and/or Predominantly Black Institution. Day in and day out, we advocate for our students and fight against racial and economic inequity. Moreover, we commit ourselves to being equal and just and to provide ALL students access to higher education.

Sadly though, it remains clear that our society can be unequal and unjust. In recent weeks, the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, and the protests that have resulted all over the country have once again reminded us of the racism that persists in America today.

The level of care and respect we show the students that call our campuses home needs to be carried over to society at large. Today, and every day, we commit to standing together against the systemic racism still spilling into our world.

We are Jersey Strong. We were born to emerge as a leader for inclusive excellence at a time like this. Our institutions will continue to welcome, foster, and educate the young people and adults in our state and beyond, many of whom will no doubt bring about the change our society needs to heal and thrive. Our state's plan for higher education explicitly calls out issues of equity and charges that we make our campuses not only diverse, but truly inclusive, safe, and welcoming spaces for students. But we must do more than make statements. We must *mean well* and *do well* right now.

MORE

Joel Bloom
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Harvey Kesselman
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Warren County Community College

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Saint Peter's University

NJ HIGHER ED COMBATING SYSTEMIC RACISM

We **must** ensure our students and their families have an outlet to discuss these important issues and how they are affected. We **must** have an organized dialogue with our entire community of students about coping with and combating racism in an appropriate manner, be it explicit acts of racism, covert racism, or everyday forms of racism, and how they can bring about positive change. This conversation must be inclusive of all students, and particularly engage white students in this collective community conversation. We **must** stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our colleagues since the last few weeks have not been a typical work week for them, and they should not have to pretend they are fine for the sake of completing their daily work responsibilities. The signatories of this letter commit to these actions post haste and plan to collectively offer forums and safe-space opportunities for everyone, especially our students. We hope you join us.

Presidents' signing below are those representing the institutional sectors of the New Jersey Presidents' Council (NJPC) for the drafting of the letter along with the Secretary of the Office of Higher Education:

Dr. Marcheta Evans, President of Bloomfield College
Dr. Joel Bloom, President of New Jersey Institute of Technology and Chair of the NJPC
Dr. Chris Capuano, President of Fairleigh Dickinson University
Dr. Miriam Frolow, Campus Director, University of Phoenix
Dr. Sue Henderson, President of New Jersey City University
Dr. Arthur Munroe, President of Essex County College
Dr. Anne Prisco, President of Felician University
Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis, Secretary, Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
Dr. David Stout, President of Brookdale Community College

The New Jersey Presidents' Council represents the presidents of 56 public and private, two-year and four-year colleges and universities in the state. The New Jersey Presidents' Council was created in 1994 as part of The Higher Education Restructuring Act and is charged with making recommendation on new programs, regional alliances, budget and student aid levels, licensure, and the statewide higher education master plan.

For further information, please contact Allison Samay, Director of the New Jersey Presidents' Council, njpc@njedge.net.

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