



OACC Statement on Racial Injustice and Inequality

The leaders, faculty, staff and students of Ohio's community colleges have been angry, frustrated, saddened and outraged by the racism that led to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many other innocent African Americans. The Ohio Association of Community Colleges stands firmly with everyone across Ohio, our nation and the world who have raised their voices seeking justice, equality, peace and an end to racism and bigotry.

As much as every organization wants to take pride in its sincere efforts to advance diversity and inclusion, recent events remind us all that no organization can ever let itself feel content, and community colleges are no different. Together we have made significant gains in the success rates of Black community college students. We should be proud of those accomplishments, but in no way should we be satisfied that the work is done.

We must also recognize that the current national soul-searching about racism comes in the wake of Black Americans having suffered a disproportionate level of sickness and death from COVID-19. As community colleges pivoted to online instruction in response to the pandemic, we were reminded of the challenges that our students often have in accessing the services that many of us take for granted. Not only has this crisis laid bare the deadly disparities in health care, but also the inequitable access to the internet, technology and wrap around services such as child care and food assistance that are increasingly basic requirements for getting the education needed for economic mobility.

What the pandemic has further amplified is the widening inequality in our economic and higher education systems that has left too many people of color behind for far too long.

For example, data shows that in the past 3 years alone, 90% of all jobs filled went to college graduates; and yet, nearly 80% of all college graduates are White. Simply put, because our educational system is not doing enough to ensure that college is accessible and affordable, we continue to deny African American, Latinx, and all low-income students an equal opportunity to self-sustaining careers. This must change.

In order to tackle these problems, we pledge to work with and listen to the perspectives of the Ohio Legislative Black Caucus, Ohio's Black community leaders, our Black students and our Black faculty and staff members. Their voices and guidance have been marginalized for too long. Listening, learning, and acting in response to what they say is more important than ever if we are to see any progress toward creating a world free of racism that we individually and collectively need.

As our colleges and communities continue to discuss and examine how we need to change in order to address the legacy of racial inequality, OACC is committed to being a resource to help us have these difficult conversations to drive equity-minded reforms. Through the Student Success Leadership Institute (SSLI), we have already been engaged in raising these important equity issues and it will certainly continue to be a focus of SSLI to help our colleges examine data and implement practices aimed at improving outcomes by race and ethnicity.

In the weeks and months ahead, OACC and our Success Center for Ohio Community Colleges will continue to identify state and national policy experts to engage in conversations with faculty, staff and academic leaders to address these racial barriers:

- On Wednesday, June 17 at 2 PM, the OACC Success Center will be hosting a webinar with the USC Center for Urban Education on “Equity-Minded Online Teaching for Ohio’s Community Colleges.” This webinar is designed to assist Ohio community college faculty to develop equity-minded teaching practices and strategies that can be applied to both in-person and online virtual classrooms. Click [HERE](#) to register for this webinar.
- The Office of Community College Resource and Leadership has created the Community Colleges for All initiative, which provides a series of condensed digital materials and videos that promote and foster success and equitable programs for diverse learners. These materials are designed for educators, students and administrators to help advance equitable education to community colleges. Click [HERE](#) to access the CC-All content.
- The National Center for Inquiry & Improvement has partnered with the California Guided Pathways Project to bring together national leaders with a deep commitment and expertise in helping close student equity gaps through guided pathways. Click [HERE](#) to access the NCII content.

Finally, community colleges occupy a unique space at this current moment in our country’s history because of our significant role in training students for service in law enforcement agencies. When Ohio’s Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board issued new, higher standards for law enforcement training, Ohio’s community colleges quickly updated our standards. Now, as Governor DeWine and leaders from across the state call for bolstering this training once again, we again stand ready to join in that conversation and to update police training standards even higher.

Community colleges serve students wanting a better future, employers wanting to be more competitive and communities who wish for better opportunities for all their residents. Ending systemic racism is solidly within that mission. We are up for the task and stand ready to join in an effort that demands immediate action.

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