



Citrus College Conversation and Call to Action
June 24, 2020
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. via Zoom

29 Attendees Including:

Dr. Geraldine M. Perri – Superintendent/President

Dr. Martha A. McDonald – Vice President of Student Services

Dr. Martha McDonald opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and introduced Superintendent/President, Dr. Geraldine Perri.

Dr. Perri welcomed the students and thanked them for being a part of the Citrus College Conversation and Call to Action. She noted that the past semester had been a very difficult and challenging one as the college faced a pandemic and national unrest.

She noted the college's support of its Black and African American students, staff, faculty and community members. As well, she noted that at the last Board of Trustees meeting on June 16th, the members of the Citrus College Board of Trustees passed a resolution in support of equity, inclusion, diversity and anti-racism at Citrus College.

Additionally, she indicated that Citrus College has responded to the State Chancellor's Call to Action by forming a college wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force with representatives from the student body, faculty, staff and management. This Task Force will work to develop a comprehensive plan focused on advancing diversity, equity and inclusion. They will assess the college environment both within and outside of the classroom to ensure a supportive, safe and inclusive environment. They will assess student outcomes and the support services provided to students. As well, an assessment of college policies, procedures, practices and plans will be conducted. The Task Force will be challenged to review the college's current curriculum and to also develop new curriculum. They will also be called upon to assess our employee recruitment, hiring and promotion practices and to broaden our efforts aimed at professional development, sensitivity training and cultural awareness. Dr. Perri noted that she wanted to ensure the students that Citrus College is committed to providing an environment where all students can thrive and meet their educational goals and grow personally.

Dr. McDonald then introduced guest moderators Azizi Williams, Assistant Head of Sequoyah School in Pasadena and Emily Singer, Director of Curriculum and Support at Sequoyah School in Pasadena.

Azizi and Emily briefly introduced themselves and shared the following poem by Micky Scott Bey Jones:

*Together we will create a brave space
Because there is no such thing as a "safe space"
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.*

In this space

We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,

We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,

We call each other to make truth and love

We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.

We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.

We will not be perfect.

This space will not be perfect.

It will not always be what we wish it to be

But it will be our space together

And we will work on it side by side.

- Micky Scott Bey Jones

You do not have to be me in order for us to fight alongside each other.

- Audre Lorde

The moderators also shared their admiration for the Teaching Tolerance website at www.tolerance.org for those who may be interested in resources for learning more. Azizi and Emily then invited conversation from the attendees.

Themes of the discussion are noted below:

- One student stated that he is taking the Socrates approach of participating in conversation while assuming he knows nothing. His role in the conversation is to listen, learn, and try to understand, while putting aside any preconceived notion, so that he can absorb what is being expressed.
- The question was posed as to what Citrus College is doing to emotionally support students of color at this time.
 - The moderators shared that Citrus College has various mental health services that students should feel welcome to use. They noted that they have been present in past forums in which staff and faculty have all expressed their support for students.
- The question was posed as to what should a student of color do if they feel they are being discriminated against by a White professor or White student and after reporting it, nothing happened?
 - Dr. Perri addressed this question stating that there are Board policies and procedures against these practices. This matter will be handled by either Human Resources and/or an outside organization that will open an investigation. The Board will decide what consequences should follow, including, but not limited to removal of a staff member.
- ASCC representatives were in attendance and expressed their interest and desire to learn about what student concerns are so that they can help to keep these concerns relevant during student body meetings.
- There was a reminder from the moderators that it is very important to take care of your mental health -- Living in fear is not a healthy way to live, and you must make sure to partner with people who are taking action as you wish to do so.
- A Black student expressed fear in day-to-day interactions with police and safety officers, due to the uncertainty of not knowing whether or not you will be dealing with a racist individual. He spoke about several family members whose lives have been taken by law enforcement officers; which in turn makes it hard to trust these entities. He also expressed frustration that many of his Black friends have never heard of Juneteenth. He

is concerned that one reason is that our education system does not teach this and that he himself was only aware because he had been taught by his grandparents.

- There was lengthy discussion in the chat about students never experiencing racism and thinking it does not exist.
 - One student stated that it is not a “big issue” to some people because they do not experience it. There is a comfort with some people being uncomfortable.
 - Azizi addressed this by stating that the way this issue will remain a relevant topic is up to young people, because they have the power to change the future.
 - The statement about not experiencing racism was addressed by explaining that “if you do not experience racism, that does not mean it is not happening”. The point was made that an individual can work as hard or even harder than the next person and may never achieve the same things because of privilege. You must understand the history in order to understand what is happening now.
 - A student commented that “If you do not break the law you don’t have to worry about the police.”
 - Moderators helped to address this comment by reminding students that sometimes things can escalate much quicker than anticipated. It does not matter if you are smart or have a great job, sometimes you will be judged based on the color of your skin – unfortunately, sometimes people are automatically assumed guilty.
- One Black student shared her experience of being discriminated against and having the “cops” called on her for “sitting while Black” in her car while waiting for a White friend. An individual had called the police, and even though she hadn’t done anything wrong, the police did not believe her story until her White friend arrived and confirmed her statement.
- Azizi responded by thanking the student for sharing her story. She stated that the most important thing we can do right now is talk about it and share these stories with others.
- Azizi reaffirmed the notion that students should remember that it is everyone’s responsibility to act, talk, and fight against these experiences. She hopes that students who are sharing their experiences are feeling comfort in knowing that they are inspiring others to speak and educate themselves.

Dr. Perri thanked students again for attending and assured the students that we are in the process of reassessing our policies, procedures and plans. She again thanked the group for sharing and providing their experiences. Though some of the feelings and experiences expressed fear and pain, they also provided a message of hope and progress.

Dr. McDonald thanked the students for attending and sharing their thoughts, experiences and concerns and closed the session.