



EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

A Liberal Education. Practically Applied.

June 5, 2020

Larnee Satchell, President
Eastern Chapter, NAACP
Eastern Connecticut State University
83 Windham Street
Willimantic, CT 06237

Dear Larnee:

Thank you for your letter of June 3, 2020, urging Eastern Connecticut State University to take action in response to continued police violence against young black males in our society. As I noted in my message to the campus community earlier this week, bigotry and discrimination have no place in America or at Eastern. Like you, I mourn the loss of innocent lives in these most recent incidents of police misconduct. I share the sorrow and pain felt in Minneapolis, Louisville, and many other U.S. cities. I applaud your interest in engaging in an active dialog on our campus about issues of racism, social justice, equity, and diversity.

I have asked my staff to work with your organization and other student groups to plan and host a “virtual town hall” in the coming weeks to address the issues you have raised. This event can serve to focus our campus dialog on the important questions of (1) how to protect the lives and ensure the rights of African Americans and other minorities in this country, and (2) how to effect peaceful yet meaningful change in our communities to honor innocent victims like George Floyd while offering hope and real action. I see this as an opportunity to educate all members of our campus community on the root causes of racism and how to defeat it. We will do so from a position of strength, stability, and progress. The Eastern community is proud of our diversity and works hard to teach and practice our core values of inclusion, empowerment, engagement, social responsibility, integrity, and academic excellence.

The percentage of students of color on our campus has increased from 16 percent to 28 percent since 2009. Eastern has the highest percentage (31 percent) of minority faculty among all Connecticut colleges and universities — including UCONN, Yale and Wesleyan. We have taught African American History since 1998, in addition to having an active Latin American and Caribbean Studies program. Guest speakers, as well as our own faculty authors, thoughtfully examine and speak to issues of racial equality and social justice. Our students receive diversity training during orientation and in the residence halls and faculty and staff also take mandatory diversity training on a regular basis. Eastern’s campus police are well trained and have an excellent relationship with students and the campus community. We should be proud of this track record.

Even so, just as we tell our students to question the status quo, we must strive to do better at Eastern. I encourage our students, faculty, and staff to be part of a positive, peaceful, and productive response to the hatred and violence that stains the soul of our great nation. Together we can change the culture. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Elsa M. Núñez
President

Cc: Dr. Stacey Close, Associate Vice Provost, Equity and Diversity
Dr. Eunice Matthews-Armstead, Chair, Diversity and Social Justice Council