**DEO Commission Letter to Presidents** January 27, 2023

In recent weeks we have all been impacted by ongoing and escalating gun violence, hate in various forms and police violence against and within communities of color. This evening, the body-cam video of the police murdering Tyre Nichols will be released. The unprecedented/extreme/magnitude of advanced calls for peaceful demonstrations is an alarming warning of the degree of brutality expected to be witnessed. The visceral, guttural trauma will reverberate throughout our communities and have a particularly profound impact on our students, staff, and faculty of color.

It is imperative that the Chancellors, Presidents, and other executive leadership recognize that, as Diversity Equity Officers, it becomes increasingly difficult to serve and lead communities through traumas that we are also impacted by. Therefore, the DEO Commission requests the following support from the Presidents and Chancellors:

**The DEO’s ask that you consider the following:**

* Acknowledge the impacts of trauma on the practitioners of equity work within our SBCTC system
* We ask that you prepare your colleges for deep and honest conversations around the impacts of these traumas
* Don’t overly burden your DEO’s with the sole responsibility to disrupt and address societal issues of hate. DEO’s are impacted by the trauma they are addressing on behalf of others.
* Prepare your Campus Safety teams to respond appropriately to issues that may arise in classrooms and on campus
* Discuss what support measures Faculty may need if the discussion comes up in class
* Prepare Counselors to address student needs and questions in the moment
* Other than EAP, consider (communicate) what support measures and resources are available for Staff and Faculty

The release of this video is being likened to our era’s Emit Till moment where a mother is seeking justice on behalf of her son while calling for transparency and peace. The video will show some horrific scenes of brutality and abuse of power by the police on the part of the officers involved.

We are not just DEOs, we are Black, Indigenous, People of Color, each of whom have been personally impacted by police brutality. Each of us has to balance, for ourselves, our professional expectations with our personal well-being. Our personal well-being should never be sacrificed at the alter of our profession.

On behalf of our DEO President, Robert Britten and the Diversity Officers Commission we give our full support to our Presidents, Chancellors and our SBCTC community as we navigate the days and weeks ahead.

As a resource, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) has shared this helpful information that can support us as we continue to support understand and realize the impacts of these ongoing tragedies.

Their service is confidential and free. They can be reached at 877-313-4455 and we urge you to keep this number readily available in the event you or a colleague need to lean into this level of support.

In Community with you all.

Robert Britten, President

Diversity Equity Officers Commission