



Dear Community and Technical College Administration,

As a council, we write with a heavy heart and concern for the atrocities currently occurring in Gaza and the West Bank as a brutal escalation of the 75 year conflict between Israel and Palestine, which are severely impacting our collective communities. We are urgently calling for care and understanding through nuanced dialogue with regard to the local, national, and international dimensions of this political and humanitarian crisis.

In 2021, the Washington State Legislature approved [Senate Bill 5227](#), which requires all public institutions of higher education to provide a professional development program for faculty, staff, and students with the purpose of eliminating structural racism and promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEI&B). Statewide, we are committed to antiracism, and this is the moment to enact our values.

We are witnessing a humanitarian genocide and catastrophe unfold before our eyes. Within Gaza, over 20,000 Palestinians have been murdered so far, with a significant number being children and women, as well as young and elderly men. Ongoing siege, communication blockouts, deprivation of water, food, electricity, and the targeted killing of journalists are among the collective punishment of the refugee population of 2.3 million Palestinians living in Gaza ([Israel-Gaza Crisis | United Nations](#)). To this date, we have noticed a lack of demonstrated understanding of this issue from our Community and Technical College systems across Washington State.

MSSDC is driven by the goal of advocating for our student's needs, especially BIPOC and those from historically marginalized communities. At this moment of time, students across our campuses are looking to our institutional leadership and faculty to demonstrate understanding, expertise, and preparedness to support students and communities that are directly impacted. We are united on our moral precepts, particularly the condemnation of Islamophobia and Antisemitism, while promoting peace, justice, safety, freedom, and liberation for all.

We recognize the tremendous impact on our Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, Jewish, Black, Students of Color, non-dominant religious communities and other systemically non-dominant populations on our campuses. Students holding these identities are currently not feeling safe in our communities. We recognize a lack of preparedness around the current moment, including allowing for student voices and perspectives, anticipating student activism, and creating spaces for the dissemination of knowledge that is not readily available via mainstream media and the dominant narrative. In order to ensure safety for all these students and provide support for them, we ask that all Community and Technical Colleges in our system protect the students' rights to voice their concerns and freedom of speech, while prohibiting discrimination on our campuses. ([US Dept of Ed: Dear Colleague \(Nov 7\)](#))

Recommendations for College Campuses

Establishment of Academic Programs and Concentrations:

- Development of instructional programs in Muslim American Studies, Arab American Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Ethnic Studies and other relevant studies in the Social Sciences and Humanities.
- Create educational academic resources - examine and curate library resources focusing on Muslim American Studies, Palestinian Studies, Islamophobia, Anti-semitism, Xenophobia, Arab American Studies, Jewish Studies, and other relevant studies.

Mental Health Awareness and Support:

- Collaborate with Counseling Centers to highlight and offer culturally competent and politically informed mental health resources.
- Coordinate focused counseling sessions to support students currently impacted

Community Collaborations and Programming:

- Encourage, finance, and support community conversations, spaces, and gatherings
 - Events and programs in collaboration with Diversity and Equity Vice President Offices, Diversity Equity Centers, Counseling Services, International Programs, Library, Faculty departments, Instructional Support Services, and Student Life.
 - Invite scholars, authors, and community organizations who offer perspectives, expertise, and critical analysis not readily available in the mainstream media.
 - Provide institutional support, funding, and opportunities for Diversity Equity Centers to lead conversations, programs, create space, and provide resources.

Student Rights and Advocacy

- Ability for students to organize, assemble, host lectures, documentary showings, events, and relevant programming. Students should have the ability to express themselves without fear of being reprimanded via means of judicial affairs and student conduct processes.
- Faculty and Staff members are encouraged to create space for critical dialogue and expanded understanding while leading with equity and empathy in mind.
- Develop and strengthen spaces such as the Muslim Student Association, Arab Student Association, Black Student Union, Multicultural Clubs, and other relevant diversity focused clubs and organizations on campus.
- Extend invitations to Civil Rights and Racial Equity organizations specializing in serving Muslim American, Arab American, and other systemically non-dominant student populations.

In Solidarity,

MSSDC Membership

For further dialogue or resources, please connect with us.

Rick Flores

rick.flores@skagit.edu

President

Multicultural Student Services Directors Council

