



Message from AICCU President Kristen Soares

June 19, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced countless new and unprecedented challenges for institutions of higher education across the country, and the 85 independent, nonprofit colleges and universities that make up our membership are no exception. We have all be forced to rethink how we deliver quality education to students of all demographics and backgrounds, in a way that maintains equitable access. Our nation has also witnessed tragic events and domestic unrest that have brought to the forefront the racial injustice and disparities that plague America’s law enforcement agencies and justice system.

The sad truth is that the recent incidents are not out of the norm, and they represent a much larger problem that affects too many members of the Black community every day. The recent examples of racism, hatred, and violence we have witnessed illustrate the broader issue of systemic racism that, unfortunately, still exists at every level in America.

If there is a silver lining amidst all the tragedy that surrounds us, it is that we are spurred to action. I have seen from our community of institutions a renewed commitment to taking action to create just environments where all students can live and learn without fear of racism, discrimination, harassment, and violence. As students return to campus this Fall term, we must continue to commit ourselves to hearing and acting on the concerns of the Black community on our campuses, ensure equitable access to higher education in all its modalities, and provide strong systems of support to ensure all students can succeed and meet their highest potential.

Students must know: We are listening. We are learning. We are committed to doing better.

These are momentous times in our country, a turning point, it seems, in the national dialogue on race—our actions must be accelerated and our response to these profound events must not end when the news stops covering the anti-racism protests. We must seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and do what is right. I am confident that—as the higher education community and as a nation—we can bring lasting change that is long overdue and create an equitable society that embraces inclusion and celebrates diversity.

Kristen Soares

Post-script: On a related note of inclusion, the U.S. Supreme Court recently rejected the effort to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a decision that no doubt brings much relief to thousands of our students. We are grateful for this positive decision, but fully recognize that is a temporary one. AICCU looks forward to working with Congress on a permanent solution that our DACA students deserve.