



August 10, 2020

## **Letter from the Chief HR and Diversity Officer**

One recent Sunday afternoon I sat reflecting on the events that have transpired over the past few months. Wow! How did we get here; how long will we be here; how long will it take us to move on to a better place as a nation, as one country, with liberty and justice for all? We have great guidance and direction, plans, and aspirations outlined in our Constitution, our Bill of Rights and our hard-fought Amendments.

Our professional and personal life stories are woven with the history of our nation. When my parents moved from North Carolina to the northeast (Poughkeepsie, New York to be exact) in the '50s, with me in tow and my brother, six years younger than me – they had great hopes for a better life for themselves and their family; as did many who went before them and those who came after. Their dreams of prosperity, raising a family out of harm's way with safety and wellness in all its forms: spiritual, financial, physical, and emotional remain much like those across the nation. All these thoughts filled their heads and directed their steps as they worked hard to make their dreams become realities for themselves, my brother, and me.

Looking back, I see how much of my life was impacted by our nation's history – learning of the violent death of a president from my teacher while in a classroom; the passing of the Civil Rights Act, the violent death of that president's brother, the violent death of a civil rights leader, and citizens taking to the streets to remind folks that promises were made that must be kept. I remember the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission being established for enforcing the much-needed laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, and the most recent inclusions of sexual orientation and gender identity.

I am reminded that diversity within our nation goes well beyond race and gender! Diversity is embedded in who we are – a land of courage and resilience, shared and separate experiences, and histories created by individuals from every nation around the world.

And now we find ourselves here, again – a nation grappling with the same struggles that others fought so hard to address. For some, this means taking to the streets in a unified, collective approach, an undergird of non-violence and yet, unfortunately sprinkled with events that would demonstrate otherwise. Nevertheless, this I do know to be true.

There are many who believe “unrest to express” and “relieve ourselves of the oppression,” to raise our voices to say, “enough is enough” and “no more!”

Now remains a time of change, more change, as stated and experienced by so many. While nonviolence is the intent across the nation – violence has been the outcome in some unfortunate instances. My desire is for that not to be the case at our University! We do not want the violence that has taken so many of us away too soon. We want the promises made to many diverse groups of individuals, promises and hope that have drawn millions from many nations onto the shores of these United States of America.....to be kept in a non-violent way! Therefore, as we continue to raise our heads and intellect high, our voices loud and respectful, our courage proud and strong while working in concert with our fellow men and women, we will sing, “we shall overcome” as we continue to pledge “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all!”

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