

Dear CNM Community,

We haven't been officially introduced yet, but today we are writing you because we share in and acknowledge the pain, heartbreak, anger, confusion, and frustration that you may be feeling.

We are CNM's Equity Council and we want you to know that you are not alone in your feelings. We have been collectively experiencing a wide range of emotions in response to the tragic events that have been plaguing the Black community. Charged with creating an equity framework aligned with CNM policies and strategic direction, Equity Council is committed to ensuring CNM provides an equitable educational experience for students and an equitable occupational experience for employees.

The members of this council have been together for more than a year now. We were formed in May 2019 to address inequity and injustice in higher education and ensure that CNM provides equitable education for our students and an equitable experience for our employees. We needed time as a group to build trust, to bond, and definitely to learn. Oh, did we need that time.

In the last year, we have learned to be vulnerable, open, and courageous in our cross-racial dialog with each other. We have made missteps in these conversations, but we have used those to become stronger as a council. We have all participated in the Undoing Racism training and have spent several months learning and using anti-racist framework to identify strategic actions we are taking to bridge the gap between our commitment to racial equity and our day-to-day work.

Right when we were scheduled to introduce ourselves to the larger CNM community, the outbreak of COVID-19 began devastating our community. We have been angered and saddened by the disproportionate rate of COVID-19 infections of our Black and Brown communities, and bear witness to how this has specifically impacted New Mexico's tribes, nations, and bands who have experienced the highest rates of exposure and death in our state. From offering immediate support to those communities to improving education equity as we shifted our classes and work online, we have learned the needs to promote equity in new ways due to the pandemic.

We have also been horrified by the obvious symptoms of systemic racism being repeatedly demonstrated through the continuous tragic murders of Black people. In response to the George Floyd murder, the Equity Council convened a series of emergency meetings because we cannot ignore the common theme or influence of systemic racism afflicting the Black community. Systemic racism shows up across institutions and society as evidenced in statistics around race and wealth gaps, employment, housing discrimination, government surveillance, incarceration, drug arrests, immigration arrests, and infant mortality. They all display obvious disparities among people of color.

Equity Council advocates for inclusion and justice that improves the lives of all of us, irrespective of our intersectional identities. To do so effectively, we focus our efforts on the immediate need of the Black community because all lives cannot matter until Black lives matter.

Equity Council is committed to advocating for resources that ensure our institution leads the way in eradicating systemic racism. Over the next few months, we will also be sharing information and knowledge on the issues which contribute to systemic racism, including covert and overt racist behaviors, and we will continue our work with the college's strategic direction teams to ensure equity outcomes are embedded in these initiatives. Equity Council is also working to create opportunities for employees and students to participate in race-based affinity dialogues in the next few weeks.

As we bear witness to recent events and the response of individuals, groups, and businesses mobilizing and speaking out against racism, we have experienced a range of feelings: sadness, disappointment, concern, anxiety, empathy, commitment, and hope. All of this can be traumatic and exhausting. We want you to know you are not alone or inferior for experiencing strong emotions in response to this time in our history.

But we also believe that right now is the time to unite. As an institution of higher education, in particular a community college, we must not choose silence or indifference. We must instead use what we have: our voice, influence, and empathy to achieve justice for the involved communities. We are in a pivotal moment and must rally around our Black students, colleagues and neighbors in their attempt to achieve true equity – justice, impartiality, fairness, and equal opportunity. We ask all of our CNM community to find ways to lend support, advocacy, and love to our marginalized communities. Together, we are stronger.

We invite you to engage with us in the following ways:

- If you are feeling overwhelmed and need a listening ear, email us (Equity_Council@CNM.edu)
- If you want to join us on the equity learning journey, or if you'd like to join the work of Equity Council, email us (Equity_Council@CNM.edu)
- If there are other ways you may want to participate, engage and be engaged, please complete the short survey that will be sent in the next week.

We are holding all of you in our hearts.

CNM Equity Council

<https://www.cnm.edu/about/equity-council>

We challenge you to learn more.

<https://www.cnm.edu/about/equity-council/equity-council-resources>