

Presidential Sponsorship: Creation of the Antiracism & Inclusion Alliance

(AIA@STCC)

Dear Faculty, Staff, Students and Trustees:

In early June, I sent a campus email set against the backdrop of COVID-19 disproportionately ravaging communities of color. My communication was also driven by the senseless murder of George Floyd and longstanding and systemic racism made plain.

STCC continues to support true policy reforms that bring justice, ensure human rights, and address criminal justice inequities. We know community colleges are specific in that our existence helps to ameliorate educational racism, which has, and continues to limit, where students attend college. There is a good deal of pride we earn as an affordable college, focused on limiting student debt for STCC graduates.

We are also clear in our institutional core values, which includes Integrity (“committed to fostering an environment that promotes truth”); Respect (“creating an inclusive environment for all”); and a Student-Centered approach (“providing a diverse educational experience that promotes personal and professional growth”). **Our stated institutional vision is that “Springfield Technical Community College will be a dynamic, multi-cultural learning community where students grow in character, intellect, and self-confidence.”**

STCC is proud of our work to be inclusive, diverse, and an institution of access. We are unique given our status as both a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), and a technical community college. As indicated by Pell grant recipients, our institution also has one of the largest proportion of low-income students in Massachusetts higher education, and over half of our student body is of color. We have two large federal grants that seek to further our development as a culturally responsive institution (HSI-STEM is a \$3.4 million award that carries us through 2021), and we are a member of the Presidents’ Alliance on Immigration and Higher Education, a coalition of higher education leaders dedicated to increasing public standing of how immigration policies impact students, campuses, and communities.

But there is indeed work to do living our vision. We continue listening and responding to our communities’ need for educational access and affordability; we continue pushing at barriers that impact retention and graduation rates for our students of color; and we continue pulling down walls that limit African American and Latinx student participation in our Health and STEM programs. This is our ethic of care; this is our work helping students transform their lives.

In summary, because our mission, and care of our students, remains a work in progress, **I am sponsoring creation of the Antiracism & Inclusion Alliance at STCC (AIA@STCC).**

We will continue to move forward actions that address our own equity gaps, and measure our success at confronting systemic racism. This Alliance will work to promote an integrated and systemic approach across the college specific to diversity, inclusion, and equity, with the stated outcome of ensuring STCC serves as an antiracist institution. Dr. Ibram X. Kendi of Boston University offers great clarity on definitions that will aid our work:

Racist: One who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea.

Antiracist: One who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea.

Dr. Kendi elaborates by offering “an antiracist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups. By policy, I mean written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people. There is no such thing as a nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups.” Using this framing and call to action, AIA@STCC will include a broadly representative group of faculty, staff, administrators, and students, with the following charge on behalf of our institution:

- **Examine how and where the college invests and supports diversity, equity, inclusion and antiracist initiatives, practices, and policies.**

Example: How is financial aid distributed at STCC by race/ethnicity?

- **Strengthen communication efforts across the college specific to equity, inclusion and antiracism work.**

Example: How does the Title III grant support faculty professional development?

- **Research and explore best practices at peer institutions, and pending COVID-19 considerations, possibly visit other campuses.**

Example: Bunker Hill Community College supports and staffs a Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth. What can STCC learn from this example?

- **Along with senior administrators, establish a framework for antiracism that is included in current and future planning.**

Example: Specific value statements, as well as goals, are developed for the pending STCC Academic Plan; also ensure faculty consideration and examination of equity as part of academic program review.

- **Provide progress reports and recommendations specific to initiatives, practices, and policies, to the President, Trustees, and campus at large.**

Example: Should STCC invest in a Cabinet-level administrator (Vice President/Assistant Vice President) with diversity-equity-inclusion-antiracism as the signature element of their portfolio?

- **Support pedagogy and curricular development through robust faculty support which scales inclusive and innovative teaching.**

Example: A number of STCC faculty have completed the ESCALA Certificate in College Teaching & Learning at Hispanic-Serving Institutions. How has this impacted classroom culture at the college?

- **Engage with shared governance bodies regarding process, progress, and development of goals and recommendations.**

Example: Liaison with the STCC All-Unit Congress; meet with STCC Student Government; present to STCC Professional Association (MCCC) and AFSCME.

- **Explore institutional diversity data and statistics with relevant offices on campus to identify areas for improvement.**

Example: If faculty and staff search pools are found to disproportionately have fewer applicants and candidates of color, work with stakeholders to change practices.

As part of this sponsorship, support of the Alliance is explicitly two-fold:

STCC Staff, within their job function, will be assigned to serve as support to the Alliance.

Funding will be provided for Alliance efforts, including the Fall Semester hiring of an equity consultant to support and aid the efforts of AIA@STCC.

Leadership of the Alliance, including facilitation and agenda-building, will include the following individuals:

Dr. Josh Carreiro, Professor of Sociology & Urban Studies Curriculum Coordinator

Darcey Kemp, Vice President of Student Affairs

Rick Greco, Dean, School of Liberal and Professional Studies

Hon. Jynai McDonald, STCC Trustee

To express your interest in serving as a member of the Antiracist & Inclusion Alliance at STCC, please email Vonetta Lightfoot, Multicultural Affairs Operations Manager, at vmightfoot@stcc.edu.

It is intended that the Alliance will be formalized in September 2020, with an inaugural meeting no later than the first week of October.