



June 1, 2020

Subject: Vice-President & Principal's Message to UTSC in Solidarity with UofT's Black Community

Dear Members of the UTSC Community:

I am writing to share with you President Gertler's message expressing UofT's solidarity with, and support for, Black members of our community in light of recent events in the US and in our city. Please see:

<https://www.president.utoronto.ca/statement-from-president-meric-gertler-in-solidarity-with-u-of-ts-black-community-members>

Right now, many members of our UTSC Black community are living in anguish as they grapple with, and try to make sense of, another instance of the recurring attack on their humanity as a result of anti-Black racism, structural inequality, and attendant injustices. I am one of them. I share common elements of their lived experience. I feel the pain myself, and so I know what they are going through.

I have heard from, or about faculty, staff, and students who are hurting as they try to manage the emotional impact of these events on top of COVID-19 that, as you know, has had a disproportionate toll on them and/or on their communities, as it has on other marginalized groups.

Many non-Black members of our institution are also genuinely horrified by the injustice of these developments, and are standing in solidarity against anti-Black racism and making their voices heard.

In the spirit of our strategic plan, Inspiring Inclusive Excellence, I ask all of us at UTSC to remain resolute in our resolve to make our campus and our communities welcoming for members of the Black community and all others, not just through rhetoric but by concrete action. The plan requires that of us; our values of intentional inclusion enjoin us, individually and collectively, not to relent in our commitment. Our actions to eradicate racism in all its forms will be the best evidence of our commitment.

As we - instructor, supervisor, or peer - engage with our Black colleagues in this stressful time, please demonstrate the necessary support and empathy. Many are struggling to manage their obligations at work, or in their studies, as they feel the surge of pent-up emotions brought on by the intensity of, and affinity to, what is happening around them.

To Black faculty, staff, and students, I say this: while we are doing everything we can to assuage your pain and emotional distress in this moment, we will continue to forge ahead with the commitments that we have made in Inspiring Inclusive Excellence, to rid our UTSC and larger community of the structures, systems, and mind-sets that create the conditions that enable the developments of the last few days. I can assure you that many individuals and various offices across UTSC and UofT are actively working together in this direction.

It is important that we all come together to facilitate healing, strengthen connections, and promote inclusion. Let's do that - not just in this moment, but as a regular part of our routines until we can collectively say the work is done.

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