

Dear Campus Community,

I write to you today with a heavy heart. This spring has been an especially trying time for us. We are physically apart from each other, the challenges of COVID-19 have overtaken our day-to-day lives and there is financial distress. What we don't talk about as much is the very sad and polarizing climate of race relations in our country right now.

The recent murders of Mr. Ahmaud Arbery, Mr. George Floyd and so many others before them have incited national anger and frustration that we cannot ignore. The outcry I'm hearing from employees and students is that the egregious incidents taking place among Black and African Americans are deeply affecting members of our university community. People of all racial and ethnic backgrounds are facing unprecedented challenges, injustices and violence.

The racially motivated killings and brutality toward African Americans and Black people have no rightful place in our nation. It is tragic that there are some among us who face these realities each day – not because they are watching the news, but because they are the Black, Brown and Native peoples our society treats unfairly. To these valued members of the SOU family, I apologize that we have not yet created a campus nor a community that fully embraces you and helps you thrive. But I promise not to rest until we have done so.

Let me be clear: Southern Oregon University condemns and denounces hate and abhorrent language and behaviors intended to harm any member of our learning community on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation or military status. We are firmly committed to peace, justice, civil discourse, social-emotional support and respect for all.

What can we do? I'll be vulnerable with you for a moment and admit that I don't always know the right thing to say or do but it won't stop me from trying. If you aren't sure, I hope that won't stop you from trying, either. If you don't know what to do, just ask, "What can I do, friend, to help this?"

Protect

Our Campus Public Safety (CPS) officers work closely with Ashland Police Department (APD) to ensure your safety. Both CPS and APD officers are trained and sensitive to balancing public safety with individual rights. Everyone's safety and well-being are our top priorities.

## Engage

In light of the recent events impacting African-American and Black people nationally, the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) is offering support sessions for students, faculty and staff that identify as Black/African American. One session was held on Saturday, May 30. I hope we will be able to host another session later this week.

I understand the need to include friends and allies during these painful events but in order to serve our African American and Black community members more effectively, some events and efforts will be held exclusively for the Black caucus.

### Additional Resources for Black Students:

1. Email Marvin Woodard, coordinator of the Multicultural Resource Center, at [woodardm@sou.edu](mailto:woodardm@sou.edu) to arrange a meeting.
2. Request funds for a Black therapist online at [tinyurl.com/soufundrequest](https://tinyurl.com/soufundrequest)
3. Request financial support at [tinyurl.com/soucaresact](https://tinyurl.com/soucaresact)
4. Get advocacy for extensions and flexibility in class at [tinyurl.com/soucaresform](https://tinyurl.com/soucaresform)
5. Social Media - Instagram: [mrccsou](#) | Twitter:  
[mrc\\_sou](#) | Facebook: [MRC.at.SOU](#)

The MRC will host an ALL-campus Zoom gathering on Tuesday, June 2, during its regularly scheduled Talk About It Tuesday session starting at 12:30 p.m. If you are interested in attending Talk About It Tuesday you can find information posted on the MRC social media sites listed above. Please join the MRC to dialogue, decompress and begin healing from these racially charged tragedies.

## Support

Students: Assistance is available from our Dean of Students office or at (541) 552-6223. We also encourage you to use the SOU Cares report to refer students or self-refer for support and additional assistance. And SOU students can always visit or call our Student Health and Wellness Center at (541) 552-6136 to schedule time with our caring and experienced counselors.

Employees: The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a FREE, confidential service to all university employees and eligible family members and provides short-term counseling services. To access this benefit, visit <https://www.cascadecenters.com/> or call (800) 433-2320, text (503) 850-7721 or email [info@cascadecenters.com](mailto:info@cascadecenters.com).

Everyone: It is critically important that we report incidents of hate and bias so they can be addressed and so the university can ensure those targeted can receive the supportive services they need.

I hope we can find unity in a shared belief in one another and in a brighter, more educated future. Let us treat each member of our community with the care, respect and dignity they deserve.

In solidarity,

Linda Schott

President, Southern Oregon University

Southern Oregon University

1250 Siskiyou Boulevard Ashland, OR 97520