Dear CU Denver Community,

As our society reckons with ongoing and systemic racism and police brutality toward Black people and other people of color, many of us are grieving, feeling anger, and moved to act.

This Friday is Juneteenth, the annual commemoration of the end of slavery in the U.S. The day is particularly resonant this year as we are actively confronting the toll that the legacy of slavery and White supremacy continues to take in America. I believe transformation requires big societal changes, but also self-reflection, a willingness to listen and learn, and taking action.

To that end, today we are announcing the extension of CU Denver’s CU in the Community program to the full year (from its previous December through March parameters). The program allows faculty and staff to take a half-day of work time to volunteer with or perform service for the organization of their choice. We encourage you to use that time, or some portion of it, on actions that dismantle racism.

We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic may prevent you from volunteering in person. Alternative ways to provide service could include education, reflection, and volunteering with organizations committed to doing anti-racist work, such as those listed below.

Local Organizations

- The Denver Justice project, led and organized by survivors of police violence, works to transform law enforcement, end mass incarceration, and seek racial justice.
- Creative Strategies for Change mobilizes arts and education for social justice.
- Soul 2 Soul Sisters are faith-based Black organizing leaders. They also lead anti-racism courses and provide a place for non-Black allies to deepen their internal work around dismantling racist oppression.
- YAASPA (Young Aspiring Americans for Social and Political Activism) works in Aurora and Denver schools to encourage and support disengaged and underserved youth to participate and make change in their communities socially and politically.
- Black Lives Matter 5280 works to build more loving and united Black communities while eliminating anti-Black violence and racism. They are raising funds for bail, legal support, and provision of direct services for Black people impacted by the current and ongoing crisis.

National Organizations

- Showing up for Racial Justice is a national organization that moves White people to act as part of a multi-racial majority to undermine White supremacy and work toward racial justice.
- The Anti-Defamation League exposes extremism, delivers anti-bias education, and works with communities and law enforcement to identify hate and mobilize people to work vigorously against it.
- Color of Change is the nation’s largest online racial justice organization. It designs campaigns to end practices that unfairly hold Black people back and to champion solutions that move us all forward. Its We Are Done Dying campaign encourages sending messages to your Congressional representatives.

In addition to expanding CU in the Community, we will continue the Office of Diversity and Inclusion’s Social Justice Teach-In series in order to bring about greater understanding, equity, and justice. Last Friday’s We Can’t Breathe Teach-In, with over 950 participants, highlighted the research expertise of our faculty and alumni ranging from the origins of policing to criminal justice research and seeing Black Lives Matter through the lens of a demonstrator. In smaller group discussions, broken out by social identity groups, people across Colorado and beyond shared lessons learned and resources.

We will continue to add resources to the CU in the Community website with the knowledge that the practice of combating racism, in society and within ourselves, is ongoing. Similarly, the university’s action list is also a work in progress. We recognize that there is still much for us to do, and we’re committed to continually reevaluating and refining our actions.

As we wrote to you earlier this month, we consider it our responsibility as a public urban research university to take action to eradicate the structures of racialized bias and power. Although there are immediate actions that can be taken, long-term and sustained change is needed. In conversations with Chancellor-designate Michelle Marks, I’ve learned of her commitment to listening to our community and identifying how CU Denver can be an even more effective change agent. She will be sharing her ideas for moving forward that important work soon after her arrival on July 1.

Dorothy Horrell
Chancellor