



College of Arts & Media

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

July 23, 2020

Colleagues,

On July 20, 2020, Chancellor Michelle Marks sent out [a clear and unambiguous message](#) about her commitment to equity and racial justice. The Chancellor spent the first 10 days of her tenure listening to student, faculty, and staff on the topics of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). She shared that this initial priority was inspired by the many who have been moved to action by the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, and other Black people.

The Chancellor is going to review the membership of current campus wide and school or college advisory boards to ensure diversity within those groups and recommend opportunities for enhanced representation. CAM has had a Diversity Committee—consisting of dedicated faculty and staff volunteers. Our nation, state, city and campus are at a point where a volunteer committee needs to segue to a task force—one that has representation from CAM faculty, staff and students. The timing of this does not align with a need for action. The 9-month academic calendar did not coincide with recent national and local demonstrations—that show how far we are as a nation from the equitable and just society that we often portray as “the American Way.”

So, on Monday, July 27th at Noon, I would like to use our weekly CAM Open Forum to discuss the following:

- 1) Shaping a framework for a CAM EDI Task Force** (made up of elected faculty and staff and appointed students). A *Harvard Business Review* stat published research by Marcia W. Blenko, Michael C. Mankins, and Paul Rogers indicates that seven (7) is the optimal size. Yet other research says that number is a bit too high. This task force will address many of the key elements of Chancellor Marks’ July 20th message.
- 2) Make a concerted CAM effort to recruit and retain more international students.** CAM has the fewest international students of any unit at CU Denver—and that is not acceptable. I will be working with Haleigh Shipley and Kristen Barrett to meet with them on a regular basis. EDI comes in many forms and we celebrate current CAM students from Mexico (3), China (2), Canada (2), Argentina (2), India, and Italy. As your Dean, I view our ability to attract and retain international students and provide CAM students with global educational experiences as essential elements of EDI.
- 3) Announce a new CAM Special Advisor to the Dean and Activist-in-Residence.** This person will help assure that CAM is a leading CU Denver unit in advancing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Our goal as educators must be twofold—not only to provide vital first-stage support to foster individual creative self-awareness, expression, and personal growth but also to motivate our students to reach out and explore the potential of emerging areas of public consciousness. I believe that we need to provide the pathways to advance their learning, both by word and personal example, to examine and challenge cultural and social barriers where they encounter them, to record through their art the vibrant dynamics of our society, and to recognize their own accountability as active and necessary contributors to this culture. Because of the hiring restrictions (due to the current fiscal condition of CU Denver) this position will be an independent contractor and not an employee (staff member).

We will likely have all-CAM Zoom planning meetings on the mornings of Tuesday, August 11th and Wednesday, August 12th. Please hold those dates.

Onward!

Laurence Kaptain, DMA & FRSA
Dean, College of Arts & Media
laurence.kaptain@ucdenver.edu