



College of Arts & Media

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

June 1, 2020

To: Faculty, Staff, Students, Alumni and community partners
From: Larry Kaptain, Dean *LK*
Subject: Our individual and collective responsibilities, as artists, scholars, makers, doers, and creators

In mid-May, the charge to our College of Arts & Media graduates was that their roles as agents of the artistic experience must be to foster individual creative self-awareness, expression, and personal growth and to reach out and explore the potential of emerging areas of public consciousness and social accountability.

The recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, clearly show a societal breakdown. As Dean, I denounce the systematic racism that is reflected by the taking of these lives (and others).

It also reminds us (as artists, scholars, creators, makers, and doers) of our responsibilities. As your Dean, I need to continue addressing and recognizing the steep social challenges and cultural barriers that we are witnessing. The deaths of Black citizens at the hands of police is unacceptable—as is the decades (and centuries-long) discrimination of the LGBTQ communities, women, Latinos, Asians, and immigrants. Systemic racism remains, despite the passage of laws, and continuing dialogues.

And while many of us feel that Denver is a safe, just, open, and comfortable place to learn, create, work and live, what we are witnessing (in recent days) is that the recent deaths of Black people (at the hands of police) in Minnesota, Kentucky, and Georgia, cannot be ignored—and beg for us to respond. Now, more than ever, we need to create, act, make, and do in ways that extend beyond our campus, city, state, nation, and into the world.

As Dean, there is a need to find the resources for turning words into action—for greater mutual understanding. I will be asking the faculty to bring tangible proposals to ensure the CAM By-Laws support research, creative work, teaching, learning, and service that will address the steep social challenges and cultural barriers that continue to challenge us as a nation. I will be meeting with students regularly to assure that their experiences are commensurate with societal needs for equality, justice, and the fairness—to which we need to aspire. Community partners, we need support so that our faculty, students and professional staff have the resources that they need for providing leadership in the community—and have greater access to global education and international opportunities (such as Fulbright programs—and others) that will provide greater awareness of our responsibilities to be global citizens.

While CU Denver and the College of Arts & Media have student enrollment data to show diversity in race, genre, and ethnicity—that is not enough. We are empowered to contribute to better understanding through our academic, professional, and creative endeavors, and most of all—as vital contributors to the betterment of our changing society.

Over the next year, [the Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) will be co-hosting a series of social justice teach-ins. The first of these discussions, focused on anti-Black violence, will be held virtually on June 12. You are invited to join into these teach-ins.