



June 8, 2020

Dear students,

We appreciate the leadership in the messages of [President Fuller](#) and [Dean Girod](#). We uphold the message from the [WOU Black Student Union](#) that specifically stated, “If our Education students don’t leave WOU knowing about bias in the classroom and playground and how to address it, more of us are going to die.”

On behalf of the Division of Education and Leadership at Western Oregon University, we also want to acknowledge the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, & Ahmaud Arbery along with countless others. We are awakened, again, to these lives stolen as national symbols of the racism Black people have suffered and continue to suffer in this country at the hands of those meant to serve and protect them. Black Lives Matter.

We acknowledge the incredible weight that our faculty, staff, students, partners, neighbors, and family members of color are experiencing today. This is a difficult ending to an unprecedented term under which people have been disproportionately suffering. We, your division-leadership many of whom retain white privilege, stand beside each of you; we see your triumphs and your pain. Your experience matters. Your dreams matter.

We feel sadness and outrage for a society that continues to fail communities of color in all institutions and in education in particular. Our grief is compounded by the realities of the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color. These truths have been forced into our consciousness today, where our privilege allowed us to avoid or dismiss them in the past. We grieve our mistakes along with the lives lost.

We feel the responsibility as a community of educators to name the ways that we have failed groups of children from the earliest ages into adulthood. We see the systemic racism that is manifested in our classrooms and school districts through policies, practices, and curriculum.

We understand that anti-racist education is a collective effort to examine and dismantle systems of oppression through incremental action towards racial justice. We commit to preparing anti-racist teachers who have the tools to teach children how to be anti-racist. We also hold ourselves accountable for being anti-racist in our teaching and in our practices. We know we can do better through ongoing reflection and action.

We call on the Division of the Education and Leadership community to recommit to:

- An ongoing reflection on our personal biases and positionality.
- Continuing to critically examine our pedagogy, practices, materials, and policies as we

prepare for fall to identify opportunities to address issues of systemic racism and its effects, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- Learning and un-learning by studying any of the resources provided in the link below.
- Supporting the [@WOUJEDIPROJECT](#) by sharing and reviewing resources, entering spaces for critical dialogue with our division, and creating spaces for students to be seen and heard, and for all of us to learn and act together.

We are reinvigorated to prepare you to enter the field of education and care to create spaces where all children thrive. Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) are not our values unless we show that we can enact them. This is a collective responsibility. Look for further resources from DEL in the fall for ways we will follow up on these action steps.

We see you, our students, as partners and leaders in efforts to continue to make changes in our university and our classrooms. We will fight for a more just nation in memory of this moment. Moreover, we will honor the fight by using this as an opportunity for awakening, collaboration, and change towards a more committed anti-racist Division of Education and Leadership.

The Division of Education & Leadership Faculty
Western Oregon University, College of Education

[Resources for learning about anti-racist education, racial justice, and whiteness.](#) We will continue to add to this list as an ongoing resource.