June 4, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The Office of Human Resources is committed to taking action to address systemic racism in our community to ensure that everyone on our campus feels safe, included, and valued. As acts of anti-Black violence continue across the country, while courageous people are engaging in activism and protest, we are also aware that COVID-19 is disproportionally affecting the lives of Black, Latinx, and North American Tribal communities, compounding experiences of loss and trauma.

This email cannot capture all that needs to be said right now.  We cannot sufficiently condemn the systemic discrimination, racism, and violence against Black people in our country and the recent senseless killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor; but we do condemn it, explicitly and entirely.  Neither can we provide a road map to end the scourge of white supremacy and racism; but we do endeavor to end it and commit ourselves to doing the work to dismantle racism and structural oppression.

In this moment, we humbly offer reminders and resources for the care of yourself, the care of Black colleagues, and learning opportunities.

# Educate Yourself

We all need to understand the structures and behaviors that perpetuate racism and harm towards Black people if we are to be effective in our responsibility to tear down those structures.  White and other non-Black people need to step up and do the work to educate themselves and ensure the burden does not fall to Black people to constantly inform and educate their non-Black colleagues.

All employees have access to online training through Everfi including courses on ***Diversity and Inclusion****,* ***Managing Bias****,* and ***Harassment Prevention***.  These courses can be accessed through myFramingham by clicking on the link at the top of the HR channel on the FSU Work tab.  If you have difficulty accessing the training, please contact Kim Dexter at kdexter@framingham.edu.  You should not expect any online course to fully prepare you to engage meaningfully in anti-racist work but please consider participating in the courses for an introduction to foundational concepts that must be understood to do the work.

We implore you to seek out additional anti-racist learning opportunities that do not place a burden on your Black friends and colleagues to educate you.  There are many options available but some include:

* Participate in this free [Anti-Racism Training](https://www.driep.org/anti-racism-training?fbclid=IwAR1iOUu2dQB-KAWRaFYWSxx0zY3W7uoP37fZhqsRkEEEInr-DcThBW7foWY) made available by the Diversity and Resiliency Institute of El Paso through June 30;
* Commit to reviewing the resources and the recommended readings in the [FSU Black Lives Matter LibGuide](https://libguides.framingham.edu/blacklivesmatter);
* Review this [Anti-Racist Resource Guide](https://tinyurl.com/antiracistresourceguide) created by Anti-Racist researcher, Victoria Alexander, which identifies things to read, watch, listen to, and more;
* Accept the [21 Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](https://www.eddiemoorejr.com/21daychallenge) and track your progress using the chart provided through the link.

# Care for Yourself

Self-care is personal and intentional so we will not presume to know what you need right now.  It’s also understandable that self-care is a challenge right now and may not even feel like a realistic possibility for Black employees. But please be reminded that all of the GIC medical carriers have telehealth options available, including mental health counseling, and copays are currently being waived for using those services until the COVID-19 outbreak is contained or the state of emergency is lifted.

FSU also provides employees access to the Optum/Mass4You EAP program. The EAP recognizes that this may be a sensitive and difficult time for many individuals regardless of race or cultural background and that there are diverse and unique reactions to recent and current events. We encourage anyone who is in need of in-the-moment guidance, counseling, or resources to contact their toll free number **1-844-263-1982** for free and confidential individualized support.  The EAP also provided the attached flyer as a general response to the recent national unrest.

Managers and leaders may reach out directly to Adam Mintz, the Optum EAP Consultant for the Commonwealth of MA, at adam.mintz@optum.com or call the Mass4You consult line (844-263-1982, option 3) for input and guidance specific to their work group or team.

# Care for Your Colleagues

Many of us may be gripped by sadness and disappointment at this time but our Black colleagues particularly may be entering the workplace, physical or virtual, exhausted and carrying profound grief, fear, and despair.  It is not a typical workday.  It is not business as usual.  The work continues but it does not mean that those doing the work are okay.  Ask individual Black colleagues specifically what you can do to support them but do not ask them to explain how they feel or to direct you in your learning and work around supporting Black communities.  White and other non-Black people must do the research and listen to the many Black voices that are speaking.

Check-in with Black colleagues even if just to explicitly acknowledge that you are aware of what’s happening.  Silence is deafening.  If you’re not sure how to start the conversation or you’re afraid of saying the wrong thing, those aren’t good reasons to remain silent.  Here are some articles to inform your outreach:

[3 Things You Should Not Say To Your Black Colleagues Right Now](https://www.forbes.com/sites/adunolaadeshola/2020/06/01/3-things-you-should-not-say-to-your-black-colleagues-right-now/#334798365a37)

[What Not To Say To Your Black Colleagues Right Now](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-not-to-say-black-colleague_l_5ed51a4bc5b6c9e929161393)

[Before You Check In On Your Black Friend, Read This](https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/06/9848854/check-in-black-friends-colleagues-what-to-say)

We all must maintain our commitment through the coming weeks, months, and years.  Speak up when you see acts of injustice and bias in the workplace.  Use your voice when others may not be able to do so.  Do not allow your empathy to wane.  Do not direct pity to your Black colleagues; direct your efforts toward change.  That is our commitment and we ask that you embrace it as your own as well.

In solidarity,

Erin Nechipurenko

Assistant Vice President of Human Resources

Kim Dexter

Executive Director of Equal Opportunity

On behalf of the Office of Human Resources team

#blacklivesmatter