

[DRAFT] Statement of Solidarity With Black Lives Matter and De Anza College Students Who Are Struggling and Protesting During These Difficult Times in 2020

As of June 3, 2020, there have been many publicly shared inspiring statements of solidarity with, and support for, the Black Lives Matter movement, sparked by the video capturing the outrageous May 25, 2020 murder of George Floyd and by the news of numerous other deaths of Black and other people of color at the hands of municipal and state-funded police officers, and exacerbated by the fact that, due to already existing societal inequities, Black and Brown and Indigenous people are also burdened with bearing the brunt of economic hardships, deaths, and illnesses from the COVID19 pandemic.

There is a need for us, as the De Anza Academic Senate Executive Committee (noting that the De Anza Academic Senate includes ALL full-time and part-time De Anza faculty employed by the Foothill De Anza Community College District), to also make a public statement of solidarity with Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the people who are part of this multiracial, multiethnic worldwide movement. And the reason for us, primarily, is because this movement addresses inequities faced by our students, and also includes BLM movement activists who ARE our students.

De Anza student Allexys Cornejo has drafted a statement to describe what she is experiencing, and circulated it for use/adaptation by other students who are also experiencing similar struggles and experiences:

“Good Afternoon,

My name is _____ and I am enrolled in your course this spring. I wanted to send an email in regards to current events. With the pandemic, I received and continue to receive support from professors; **as an essential worker(/someone impacted by the changes from COVID-19)** my days are draining and the climate of society can be hard to feel ok. I appreciate that my professors and college show they care. That being said, as an activist; I think it is impossible for myself and students like myself, or especially black students to pretend we have the capacity to sit and read assigned texts or sit and complete work when our community is suffering. De Anza is a college filled with black and brown folks that commute from San Jose. We make a great population. These students and others are protesting in the streets for hours to demand justice to make change; but at the expense of our grades. I haven't had any professor show solidarity with the community that makes up De Anza and makes our campus great. Not even nearly as close to when the pandemic began. I want to ask how are professors showing solidarity with the community and black lives? Most colleges are out for the summer and that means De Anza can't just follow lead but they must take lead. I understand that we are still in school and as students we should prioritize that; but why and how can we when our professors aren't prioritizing their students and the things they're experiencing?

I hope you can take action in being there for your students, as this time is very trying and heartbreaking as we demand change.”

In addition, in recognition of increased student mental health distress, our De Anza Health Services and Psychological Services have set up virtual Mental Health awareness programming/events, support groups, and remote synchronous one-on-one therapy counseling services to support these needs of our students.

The De Anza Academic Senate acknowledges the collective pain and difficulties that our students and other members of our collective college and worldwide communities are

facing. As Sam Sifton (June 3, 2020, NYT Cooking listserv email) notes, “Concentration is hard to come by these days, amid the nation’s strife. We are living through a tough and chaotic and wrenching time, filled with fury and an abiding sadness. We’re unsettled. We’re tense. We’re divided. The emotions arrange themselves in combinations that make it hard to work, to read, to watch, to listen, much less to think.”

The De Anza Academic Senate stands in solidarity and support with our students and faculty who are suffering physically, mentally, and emotionally as a result of this social strife and upheaval that has accelerated in Spring 2020, and also stands in solidarity with our students and faculty who are activists in the Black Lives Matter movement.

The De Anza Academic Senate also stands in solidarity with the worldwide Black Lives Matter movement and with our Black Staff and Faculty Association and their demands for:

1. Full-time Tenure Umoja Counselor
2. Support and visibility for our black students/safe place for our students
3. Official Black Student Union (BSU)
4. Establish budget for all programs
5. Opening Day- speakers(Joy DeGruy)
6. Recruitment for black students/staff and faculty
7. Opportunity for staff- professional growth and advancement particular for black staff
8. Want the support to maintain and establish black studies courses

As another part of that solidarity, the De Anza Academic Senate urges all faculty/instructors to do whatever they can to support their students and themselves during these difficult times. This includes but is not limited to:

- Encouraging their students and themselves to engage in self-care measures, including measures to take breaks as needed from doing academic work.
- Not relying solely on Black colleagues and students or other colleagues and students of color to speak up to denounce racism and other forms of oppression.
- Adapting their course assignments and grading policies to help students make sense of what is happening in this world, and adapt the work of the course to make the workload and expectations humane for both students and faculty/instructor.

- Helping students feel safe to approach faculty/instructor with whatever they are going through and work with students to come up with options for them to complete the course successfully.
- Connecting with De Anza Counselors, Deans, Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, and other Student Services support as appropriate to help students determine the best course of action in response to their needs/struggles. If needed, Academic Senate officers Karen Chow, Mary Pape, and So Kam Lee stand ready to support faculty/instructors in making these connections.
- Where/when possible, adapting your curriculum and syllabus, if you haven't done so already, so that course content addresses societal privileges, systemic racism and other oppressions/marginalizations, and police brutality.
- Participating in campus, division, and department Equity work.