Dear GCC Students;

During this moment of collective frustration and anger the world is ablaze. The protests and marching are all exhibits of the anger and hurt that so many of us are feeling. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and amplified the inequities in our society. While much of the world is on pause and taking time to reassess, the events in Minneapolis serve as evidence that racism and hatred are still very much alive. My heart is aching for my community and disturbed by the way in which our society is divided by ignorance and racism. The pain, anger and frustration have come to a head and now we must acknowledge the agony and inject society with a renewed vision if we have any chance of moving towards healing.

Viewing the filmed murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breanna Taylor, Tony McDade and countless others has become too commonplace. Through social media and recordings on mobile devices, the images will forever be burned into our minds and the pain felt in our hearts. As a Black man in America, I feel the pain in a way that is indescribable and too often numbing. I am frequently at a loss when I attempt to explain to my daughters why we must tell the world that Black Lives Matter.

Grizzlies, I know many of you struggle with similar feelings of confusion. The pain and frustration you feel is why many of you have taken to the streets to rage against the tyranny of racism and fight oppression when you decided to participate in rallies and protest over the past few days or in the coming months. I pray that you all are safe and unharmed during your plight and advocacy for human rights. Know that you are not in this alone.

This College, your College community, is behind you! We recognize that as members of this society we have a responsibility to engage in educational activities and facilitate healthy debate and dialogue. I pledge to you that the Division of Student Engagement and I will continue to support you. We will provide access to resources and information. We will continue to provide inclusive spaces on campus, virtual and in-person, to help you feel connected to the campus community. We will work as leaders to build a better Guttman that is profoundly conscious and fully committed to the celebration of your full humanity. You are our current change-makers and future leaders and we will continue to have your back.

In this moment, we stand by you! The fight for justice and against inequality is a pledge we make to you as partners and co-conspirators in the plight.

Thank you for your time, please stay safe and see you all soon.

-Dean Pryor

Charles H. Pryor, II
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