COM JOINS THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE EQUITY LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

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KENTFIELD / NOVATO, CA—College of Marin (COM), along with 63 other community colleges, has joined the California Community College Equity Leadership Alliance to confront racial inequities within their educational system.

This alliance was started by Shaun Harper, Ph.D. at University of Southern California's Race and Equity Center to support community colleges in addressing issues of racial and educational inequities. Harper began the alliance in Los Angeles in January and launched the initiative statewide in the wake of mass protests fueled by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Superintendent/President David Wain Coon states at this time measurable actions are needed to address "the systemic racism, inequities, and injustices that exist for Black and African Americans and other people of color." According to Coon, in joining the Alliance COM now gains access to monthly meetings "focused on professional learning, development of actionable steps, access to resources, and campus climate surveys."

COM had their first meeting with the Alliance on June 16. Faculty member Yashica Crawford, Ph.D., was one of 18 members attending. She said the meeting was "a great cross section of the campus. The people in attendance have been working on racial equity even prior to COVID-19 and the current movement for Black Lives protests. Now, everyone is coming together to create a comprehensive action plan to root out institutionalized racism, and our partnership with the alliance will provide us with the data and strategies to help strengthen our approaches."

The alliance partnership comes on the heels of other measurable actions COM has created to identify and change areas of racial and educational inequities within their system. Crawford, a faculty member with COM's UMOJA Learning Community (http://www1.marin.edu/umoja), is also on COM's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Action (IDEA) Committee which started in 2017 and is a "source for a lot of the ideas we have toward creating equity," Crawford adds.

In addition to the IDEA Committee, COM supports and expands learning communities that help underrepresented students bridge gaps in equity and inclusion by increasing educational and cultural experiences. While anyone can join these learning communities, their primary focus is to promote opportunity and empowerment for those who have been left behind by the educational system.

"When we switched to online the UMOJA community kept going," Crawford said. "Psychological Services hosted a webinar on depression and the African American community. We continued our Woman 2 Woman events, we launched an outreach campaign to check in with our students, and we provided emergency grocery funds. We finished the semester with a live virtual graduation ceremony to honor our graduating scholars."

COM Trustee Wanden Treanor states that this is not COM's first interaction with USC's Race and Equity Center. In 2017, the College sent employees to the USC Center for Urban Education, which recently merged with the USC Race and Equity Center. The focus of the College's [redacted] how to create a level playing field to assure hiring of faculty and staff re[redacted] students. Treanor says, "traditional hiring methods tend to preclude diverse areas of strength, noting

that professors of color can be eliminated in the written application or if there is only a traditional interview. If, for example, all candidates are asked to give practical examples of how they teach, teaching demonstrations are more engaging, interactive, and allow the skills of diverse candidates to shine."

When asked how the Board will measure the College's progress with creating structural and systemic change, Trustee Treanor states, "we have an equity plan with a commitment to eliminate equity gaps and an expressed statement to retain equity-minded employees. Our equity plan has measurable objectives that we will closely monitor and take a deep dive into disaggregated data to ensure we are meeting the goals of the plan."

COM is committed to continually move toward becoming a more racially equitable and inclusive campus for its students and employees. Crawford concludes, "if anything, I think COM—from the Board and our leadership to the students, staff and faculty—we're ready and we look forward to creating a new future."
More information about COM's learning communities (http://www1.marin.edu/learning-communities) is online.

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