

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

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August 21, 2017

Dear Colleague,

As our colleges welcome students back to our campuses this week for a new academic year it is important for each one of us reflect on the clarity of our mission and of our system's values in light of recent events.

The [Board of Governors](#), unanimously and in unambiguous terms, stated in January that the California Community Colleges embrace diversity in all of its forms and that all people have the opportunity to reach their full educational potential regardless of their background or immigration status. In recent months the Chancellor's Office and colleges have sought to reassure students that our campuses will remain safe, welcoming places for all students to learn and let them know that no changes have been made with regard to admissions or financial aid.

As we have seen recently, an old and vile menace has visited some college campuses across the country to spread hatred and terror. The California Community Colleges denounce white supremacists such as the KKK and neo Nazi groups that seek to incite violence and attack core values of human dignity. As the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) points out, these groups are drawn to college settings because our campuses reflect the highest ideals of human rights, including free speech.

It is all of our responsibility to ensure that college campuses proactively help students understand, deliberate and debate recent events in a constructive manner. This is a time that requires college leaders to demonstrate through their own actions how civil debate should take place. It is also a time when colleges must be prepared for on campus demonstrations and protests. Taking [these](#) steps will help ensure that we are not diverted from our mission of helping students build better lives for themselves and their communities.

This new academic year we are guided by a [Strategic Vision](#) that articulates the challenges we face and seeks to build on past successes to meet bold goals aimed at improving student outcomes. I can think of no more effective strategy to defeat hate than all of us joining together in renewed commitment to help our students achieve their educational dreams and make positive contributions to our civic life and economy.

Thank you, for all you do for our 2.1 million students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "EO", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eloy Ortiz Oakley