

ENGAGED TEACHING

/ / Closing the Quarter with Compassion: Black Lives Matter

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Dear Colleagues,

Black lives matter.

In the days since George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police, we have seen a public outpouring of rage and sorrow at the continued anti-Black violence perpetrated by police, and perpetuated by entrenched racism across American society and institutions. These instances of police brutality against the Black community come at a time when communities of color have already been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, as a result of longstanding and pervasive injustice in access to healthcare, economic resources, and the stress of life under racist systems in the United States.

Both the long-term and immediate manifestations of anti-Blackness in the U.S. place particular strain on our students and colleagues who are people of color, and all our students may be feeling upset, afraid, and helpless in the face of highly visible acts of violence and injustice. It can be difficult to know what action is appropriate and helpful for students in responding to these events in our classrooms. This may be especially true this quarter, in our remote classrooms, where familiar ways of connecting with students take different forms.

As spring quarter draws to a close, the Teaching + Learning Commons Engaged Teaching Hub would like to share some ways that faculty and graduate student instructors can use the remaining time this quarter to support students. We know many UCSD educators have already responded with great care and concern to their students, and we are grateful to our faculty colleagues who have shared with us several of the ideas and examples below:

- **Send your students a message acknowledging the potential impact of current, traumatic events on students and expressing your support.** Research suggests that students appreciate faculty members' acknowledgement of traumatic events in the classroom.
 - Affirm students' feelings of sadness, frustration, and anger, and express understanding for the difficulty of completing coursework at this time. If you are able to offer flexibility in course requirements for completing your class, share these accommodations and actively

encourage students to make use of them without stigma. You can also use this message to connect students with campus support (see below).

- [Example of a message to support students.](#)

- **Implement flexibility surrounding final assessment in your courses.** The effects of [trauma and stress impede learning](#). Young people are also at the forefront of many of the protest actions; students may currently be devoting considerable time and effort, and potentially risking personal safety, to support critical efforts to advance justice. Some ideas for implementing flexible policies include:

- Modify your grading policy so that final exams and/or projects can raise grades, but will not lower them. Go here to view a [guide to setting up “no-fault” finals in Canvas.](#)
- Make exam timing flexible by moving to a take-home exam, or extending the window for taking an exam.
- [Example of a message integrating a non-punitive final exam.](#)

Please view [Academic Senate recommendations](#) surrounding flexibility in final assessments for this quarter. If you would like to discuss your ideas with an Education Specialist from Engaged Teaching Hub, we are here for you. Please [request a consultation here](#) and we will get back to you promptly.

- **Create a space for students to talk with you, or with each other, about their experiences. Simply listening goes a long way.**
 - Consider offering extra Zoom drop-in hours for students who would like to connect with you or others. Focus on listening and affirming students’ feelings (see a [one-page resource on empathic listening](#)). Zoom breakout rooms and the waiting room feature can allow you to talk to students privately, or in small groups, as appropriate.
 - If you are comfortable creating space for students to discuss traumatic events in class, here are some [ideas for ensuring that those discussions are safe and productive spaces](#), especially for students of color. The National Museum of African-American History also has specific resources for [“Talking about Race”](#) for educators, parents, and self-education.
 - [Example of announcements to create space for challenging conversations.](#)
- **Share campus and other support resources for students.**
 - [CAPS](#) is available to support students with tele-health counseling. Their crisis number (24 hrs) is: 858-534-3755. CAPS also has [group workshops and open forums](#) that students can join to share experiences and access support.
 - [Campus Community Centers](#), including the [Black Resource Center](#) and the [Cross-Cultural Center](#), provide spaces for community, support, and dialogue.
 - [Blackline](#), focused on support for Black, Black LGBTQI, Brown, Native and Muslim communities, provides call and text support for those in crisis and for reporting anti-Black encounters with police and vigilantes.

- **Share resources to take action to help students combat feelings of helplessness.**
 - UCSD’s Cross-Cultural Center has compiled a list of Resources for Support and Action that you can share with students.
 - ASUCSD has created Black Lives Always Matter: A Legislative Action Guide Focused on Racial Justice.

Finally, we know that faculty, and especially faculty of color, are also impacted greatly by these events, and many faculty are themselves engaged in protests and actions in support of justice. The Faculty and Staff Assistance Program is available for one-on-one counseling for faculty and staff, and CAPS are available to consult with faculty on questions regarding student mental health and assist with connections to resources. Engaged Teaching staff are also available for consultations if you would like to discuss further how best to support your students in your class, and yourself in your teaching role.

Engaged Teaching Hub stands in solidarity with all who are mourning and seeking justice. We are also committed to action: both to continue our own education on how systemic racism impacts our work as educators, and to working with partners to interrogate and dismantle racist systems in our campus and community.

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