Lance Heard:

This is not the time to be silent. This is the time to speak clearly about what matters. This statement, in part, represents that we're not only going to speak at a time when these words are needed, but we're going to recognize that our actions will often speak louder than the words that we say.

Christina Barsi:

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

Sun Ezzel:

And I'm Sun Ezzel and you're listening to the Magic Mountie podcast.

Christina Barsi:

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak, by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

Sun Ezzel:

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

Speaker 4:

And I know I'm going to achieve my goals and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

Speaker 5:

She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly Pomona. Psychology major, English major.

Sun Ezzel:

From transforming part time into full time.

Speaker 6:

I really like the time that we spend with Julie, about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

Christina Barsi:

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

Speaker 7:

Think of the natural environment around us as a library.

Christina Barsi:

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC. But most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni, and producer of this podcast.

Sun Ezzel:

And I'm Sun Ezell, Learning Assistants faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

Christina Barsi:

And this is the Magic Mountie podcast.

Sun Ezzel:

Black lives matter, Mount San Antonio College, Academic Senate Resolution 2020 08.

Lance Heard:

Whereas the Mount San Antonio College Academic Senate condemns the recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Botham Jean, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, and too many others. And-

Christina Barsi:

Whereas, following the killing of George Floyd and subsequent protests, students of the Mount San Antonio College community have expressed in both public and private, outrage, anxiety, concern for their physical safety and wellbeing, and the concerns about their liberties and rights, all of which may negatively impact the achievement of their educational goals. And-

Sun Ezzel:

whereas the college's mission statement pledges to support and to empower all students in achieving their educational goals in an environment of academic excellence, with our core values of integrity, equity and diversity, community building, student focus, social justice, lifelong learning, and positive spirit. And-

Lance Heard:

Whereas schools should be places for the practice and enforcement of equity, for the building of understanding, creation of knowledge and for the active engagement of all in creating pathways to freedom and justice for all people.

Sun Ezzel:

Resolved, the Mount San Antonio College Academic Senate declares that the lives of our black students matter and affirm the rights of black students, staff, faculty, administrators, to be treated with respect and dignity. And-

Christina Barsi:

Resolved. We express solidarity with the protestors in Minnesota and throughout the world who are peacefully expressing their outrage and frustration at the deaths of unarmed African Americans. And-

Lance Heard:

Resolved. We will seek to address institutional racism on our campus by supporting and facilitating professional development work related to race and other challenging topics and invite faculty across disciplines and content areas to use resources that are inclusive of all of our diverse learners. And-

Sun Ezzel:

Resolved. We encourage ongoing critical reflection, and we urge staff, faculty and administrators to have difficult and honest conversations concerning systemic racism, social injustice and racial and ethnic bias as we commit to acting towards anti-racism.

Sun Ezzel:

This as Sun Ezzel and I'm here today with Chisa Ugaki, Lance Heard and Kelly Rivera, the President, Vice President and Vice President elect of the Academic Senate. And we're here today to talk about the college's commitment to affirming that black lives matter, the actions that our campus is going to take moving forward and the role of the Academic Senate in doing this crucial work.

Sun Ezzel:

Welcome. Would you introduce yourselves and tell us a little bit about yourselves?

Chisa :

Hi everyone. My name is Chisato Ugaki and I am faculty in the library. This is the end of my 13th year at Mt. SAC and I have been serving as Academic Senate President for about a year and a half. My professional work in libraries has been really focused on issues of equity and access to information and how we understand knowledge and the sharing and valuing of knowledge and information. So, this is an extension of that work for me in terms of thinking about ensuring that our students have access to the education that they deserve.

Lance Heard:

Hello everyone. I'm Lance Heard, one of the Vice Presidents of the Academic Senate, and I'm also an administration of justice professor and the chair of the Public Safety Programs Department. And I've been at Mt. SAC for 12 years now.

Kelly Rivera:

Hi everyone. I'm Kelly Rivera, a professor of political science at Mt. SAC. And on the Senate I serve as the Secretary and Legislative Liaison. I'm also an incoming co VP. I advise the political science club here on campus, and I'm extremely proud of the work that they're doing. The subject matter we are discussing today is certainly relevant to my study of interest in terms of as a scholar, but also as a member of our community, as we work to make our campus open and accessible and a place where everyone can come and learn and seek progress in their lives. And so I am grateful to be here to discuss those issues today on the podcast.

Sun Ezzel:

So last night, Dr. Scroggins sent a letter to the Mt. SAC community, united against racism. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the crafting and the message of that letter?

Kelly Rivera:

Sure. I can jump in. In a meeting with Dr. Scroggins, Chisa, Lance and myself, Monday morning, we discussed a campus response to the tragic death of George Floyd and the following protests around the nation. It was decided that it would be very strong for Mt. SAC as a community to release a statement on the matter, to take a position and clearly show that position to our staff, our faculty, our students, and the community that we are a part of. So with that direction, Lance Heard, myself and Chisa began drafting a letter. In that letter, we wanted to make several points. First, we wanted to be very clear that the campus condemns the murder of George Floyd and the processes that led to that. We wanted to be very clear that Mt. SAC as an institution is looking to improve and do the work we need to do to ensure that we are contributing to a society that moves towards anti-racism. And those were the main goals of that letter, that was released on Wednesday in an email called united against racism.

Chisa :

I think one of the things that's really important and that we reflected on in developing the letter, is that we do have strongly stated commitments as an institution. And we've strengthened those recently with a revised draft of our mission, our vision, and our core values. In our core values, we've included social justice in those, and we certainly have diversity and equity in those. And so, I think that we do have a strong foundation that is our philosophical approach and we have worked hard on lots of different fronts, on looking at things like the equity gaps in achievement and how those play out disproportionately for certain populations.

Chisa :

So, as an institution of higher education, of course that's one of the areas we look at. We also look at basic needs of students and how that is also impacted. But I think one of the things that we wanted to be clear about in this message that we shared with the campus, and that was broadly signed onto by leadership across the campus, that it's just very simply not enough to have these as our tenants. And these as the principals, if we are not acting upon them. And if we are not engaged in powerful and consistent ways to be working against racism.

Chisa :

And one of the great challenges with that, I think right now, particularly within this moment where we also have transitioned to online instruction and we are all sequestered at home and all of these other stresses in our lives, is that anti-racism work is hard and is exhausting, but living in a society that has inequity is even harder and even more exhausting. So I think we just have to do that work. And so, both the resolution that was passed at Academic Senate today and the letter, are really calls to continue to action and engagement as an institution, to really live by those principles and core values that we've already agreed to.

Lance Heard:

Along with what's already been said, I think that we lead by example, and this is a critical time in our nation. This is a critical time in our culture. This is a critical time in our community. This is not the time for inaction, and this is not the time to be silent. This is the time to speak clearly about what matters. And this statement, in part, represents that we're not only going to speak at a time when these words are needed, but we're going to recognize that our actions will often speak louder than the words that we say.

Lance Heard:

And there's also an acknowledgement that for each of us, we know that a tremendous amount of work has taken place over the years, right on this campus with regarding equity, with regarding bias, with regard to racial discrimination. And we all want to accept that it hasn't been enough, that we haven't done enough and there's more, perhaps much more, that we're going to need to do in order to not have the crisis that's going on today in our community.

Kelly Rivera:

I echo those sentiments exactly. It's critical to do more than support those who stand up for their rights, for equity. It's imperative that we support in meaningful ways, the work to make that a reality in the spheres that we hold power. And it is our responsibility as members of higher education in our community, our state, our nation, to be thoughtful and forward-looking about how we can make a difference.

Chisa :

What Kelly was just saying made me think about, in terms of the sphere, the specific sphere of influence for the academic Senate. We concern ourselves with activities that have to do with the academic and the professional matters of the campus. So that's curriculum, it's student preparation, achievement, and equity, and it's professional development for faculty. And I think when you think about those, those very clearly intersect with the issues that we're dealing with. And this past Wednesday, the chancellor's office hosted a webinar that I really want to recommend that anyone who wasn't able to be present, we'll include the link and I encourage you to watch it and to listen to it. Towards the end of the webinar, which was called a call to action for California Community Colleges.

Chisa :

Again, they were focusing on the action that we need to take as a system of California, community colleges, and a number of the priorities that they listed are directly related to the work of the Academic Senate. So, one of them was a system wide review of police and first responder training and curriculum. So, they're specifically talking about first responder and police. We have fire, we have paramedic, we have nursing, we have lots of folks who are involved in careers and we are involved in the career education. And so, we can instill into that curriculum, critical components that ensure that there is a consciousness and understanding of racial bias and how we, in the various different ways, can ensure that we're working against that.

Chisa :

So that's one area, of course, in our transfer curriculums, there are also critical thinking components. And so, I think there's a lot of opportunity in terms of infusing the curriculum. Other areas of action that were included by the statewide Academic Senate and the chancellor's office in their webinar was the idea of hosting open dialogues on campus. And that is something that I think that the Senate can absolutely be involved in and support. We've already had a couple of requests from faculty who want to put together a task force and be sure that we're including students in the conversations. I do want to mention that the united against racism email that came out from the President's email address was also signed on to, by the President and Vice President of the associated students and by the student trustee, so that we are united with our students in this work as well.

Chisa :

Other items that were in the chancellor's office call to action, also included doing an audit of the classroom climate and creating an action plan to create inclusive classrooms in anti-racism curriculum. So, not just what's in the curriculum, but how we deliver it. And so, that'll be an area where we look at that that will impact professional development and curriculum development and will be something that we will need time to consider and training to be provided and that we'll need to work together on and make sense for the Academic Senate to provide some leadership around that. So, we look forward to engaging with faculty in that work.

Lance Heard:

So, Chisa has mentioned a couple of areas in the California Community Colleges call to action. And the last one, the sixth one, talks about engage in the vision resource center, community colleges for change. And that's something that everyone can do. But one of the examples that I hope we begin to do soon here at Mt. SAC on our campus, is look at some of the recent modules that have been added there. One of the recent modules that's been added to the vision resource center is a module on improving equity and campus hiring. And that module covers data, practices and resources to improve equitable hiring for community colleges. And so my hope is that for all of our hiring committees this year, that the members participate in that module before doing work on the faculty hiring committees.

Sun Ezzel:

Thank you so much. Are there any other resources for folks to take action right now? Maybe some of our listeners are wondering, "What can I do now? What can I do over the summer break?"

Kelly Rivera:

Thank you, Sun. I think one of the things we can do right now is consider reaching out to our students. I know many faculty already have, and if you have not, it's a good place to start, to let students know that they are your priority. And you are aware of what's happening in the nation and are thinking about how it impacts them. Many departments and divisions have released statements or resources that can be used. I will share some that we've shared from the geography and political science department that can be possibly linked at the end of this podcast for resources, but there's a list of articles dealing with the black lives matter movement as a good reading source. I can also share some policy solution readings that are available. We can look at things like, Know Your Rights, something that is a great resource from the ACLU to share with our community about what it is to exercise your rights in the public space.

Kelly Rivera:

Another fantastic resource is 26 Ways to Be in the Struggle Beyond the Streets. And it looks at a variety of ways that people are able to engage with a social movement without having necessarily to be in the protest at the moment that it is happening, if that is not the right venue for them. And of course, we have counseling and health services on our campus. So, I'm happy to share these resources that the department I'm a member of, we've put together. But I think it is critical that faculty work on building bridges with their students, with their colleagues, that they have open and honest conversations. That is a great place to start and to be introspective on what they can, what we can personally improve, what we might need to ask for help with and where we think our strengths are, where we can lead the way for others.

Chisa :

I'd also like to add that, and I think that Lance brought this up, that there's a real role for accountability here. So, I think it is very important that we hold each other to the high standards that we expect at Mt. SAC, and that we take care not to speak for our black colleagues and our black students, but that we hold space for them to speak. And we support them in that work. But that we also recognize that the work is for us to do. I read a statement today that, there was something in the tone of it, that made it sound as if this is a problem for the black community. And this is a problem for our entire nation, that we are all responsible for. But I think those of us who, as Kelly said, are in positions that we can take some responsibility and accountability and action and support action need to do so.

Chisa :

So, I think that that is really important right now. And as a librarian, I would be remiss if I did not also recommend that for those of you, for whom it's useful and helpful and thought provoking, and I'll suggest some other resources as well. A friend of mine, Dr. Nicole Cook from the University of South Carolina has put together anti-racism resources for all ages. So it does really go across the age range if you want resources that are going to help you in terms of talking with your kids or that you can look at to broaden your own understanding and perspectives and ability to be anti-racist. I recommend looking at some of those resources.

Sun Ezzel:

Chisa, Lance and Kelly, I want to thank you for joining us today for this conversation to share the work of the Senate, the actions that the Academic Senate is taking and I'd like to thank you for your leadership and your hard work and your vision.

Kelly Rivera:

Thank you, Sun. We are very grateful that the Magic Mountie podcast made space for this conversation on short notice. And we're thankful for your invitation and all of your hard work putting this together.

Lance Heard:

Thank you, Sun. I hope we can talk again.

Chisa :

Thanks, Sun. I think, yeah, that we're just getting started, in a way, on this conversation. We're looking back at a long history and looking forward to hopefully hard work together and much appreciation.

Sun Ezzel:

We have a lot of work to do, but I'm glad that we're able to do that work together. Well, thank you so much for joining us.

Sun Ezzel:

Hi, this is Sun again with a quick coda, we wanted to share some resources and opportunities for professional development as a followup to today's conversation. You can find links to the resources discussed, including black lives matter resolution, the colleges united against racism letter to the campus, the chancellor's office call to action and anti-racism resources for all ages in the show notes. Mt. SAC is offering racial equity and education certificate programs for professional development, developed by Dr. Frank Harris and Dr. Luke Wood professors of education at San Diego State University, creators of CORA, the Center for Educational Responsibility and Advancement and co-directors of the community college equity assessment lab.

Sun Ezzel:

Dr. Frank Harris was the keynote speaker for Mt. SAC's Fall 2019 flex day. You can hear his keynote speech in episode 60 of the podcast and his fall flex day breakout session is featured in episode 63. Dr. Harris and Dr. Woods racial equity and education certificate programs are designed to provide college educators with an introduction to racial microaggressions and unconscious bias and their numerous in educational settings. These programs offer both live sessions with CORA facilitators and opportunities to dialogue with your Mt. SAC certificate program cohort, and are open to all Mt. SAC faculty, classified and managers. You can learn more and register on the pod connect calendar.

Christina Barsi:

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie podcast. Remember to subscribe on Apple podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you like to get your podcasts. So you can listen in the car, in your office, or however you like to listen. Once you subscribe, we'd love to hear what you think by leaving us a review, and don't forget to share your favorite episodes.