



*President's Office*

*RE: Statement to the College and Call to Action – Friday, April 14, 2023*

Dear All:

I hear, appreciate, and value each of you. I stand by and hold myself to account for the commitments I made in the Presidential Initiative on Anti-Racism and the Black Experience in America. I am committed to expanding your opportunities to learn and succeed. Whereas I don't respond to demands, I do respect questions. I do respect your conviction. And, I commit to responding fully to both.

The College is committed to removing any and all barriers that keep students, faculty, and staff from taking full advantage of and contributing to our mission.

This does not mean we always satisfy, or can ever be fully satisfied in, the full realization of our values and commitments. Indeed, we have not been able to lead every new idea or project to full, effective implementation. We have more work to do. Further, we do not always have the information or insights we need or agree on the next steps. Even then, our disagreements are necessary and healthy when we express and engage them to learn from one another and to find the best way forward. Communicating with one another openly, truthfully, and constructively is paramount.

For these reasons, I would like to thank you for sending your letter of April 14, 2023 and for the opportunity to address the many questions you have raised, explain what the College has done to improve upon our commitments, frame outstanding issues, and offer constructive channels for us all to contribute to our continuous efforts to be a better, stronger community.

I have attached my thoughts in response to your letter. I know that written words alone cannot fully address your concerns. Nonetheless, this response may help to inform both our direct discussions and effective remedies for the many issues you raise.

I am committed to working with ASCMC and you to enhance our joint communication and look forward to scheduling that opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience.

Until then, take care, and very best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hiram'.

Hiram E. Chodosh  
President

## Thoughts in Response to Your Letter of April 14, 2023

### *Foundations of Mutual Respect*

Effective responses to unacceptable conditions can only emerge through a deeply felt mutual respect that comes from close relationships with peers, staff, faculty, Board members, and college leadership, including me.

We have to do better in all dimensions and directions to overcome this important set of challenges and improve our climate through more direct discussions and kind, warm, inclusive behavior that embody the values of friendship, trust, and mutual respect, as these are necessary for everyone in our community to thrive.

That means me, too. As president, I am always open to meet with students (as well as staff and faculty) to engage about new opportunities or matters of concern, whether just to listen or to answer questions and work toward solutions. I look forward to meeting in person.

### *The Effectiveness of the Presidential Initiative*

The Initiative and the work leading up to it have had a deep impact on the College. This does not mean we are done with our objectives. This also does not mean that we will all be able to feel the impact on a day-to-day basis, especially in a three-year period where we have lost our baseline and continuity of experience due to the pandemic. Unfortunately, we were not in residence for the first 18 months of the Initiative, and we lost a significant level of social memory and continuity that has been difficult to restore. The psychological impact and the development of close friendships in isolation from the broader campus pulled us apart. This separation and the increased divisiveness we experience in society, more generally, remain overriding concerns. This includes effects on us, disruptions in our relationships and communications. That has undermined the availability and retention of key information about the progress we have made and the work underway. This not an excuse, but a critical factor we must all acknowledge.

During the first year of the Initiative, we developed a comprehensive framework that represented all campus constituencies. We had steering committees of students, staff, faculty, and alumni. We gathered the recommendations from each of these groups and implemented them in the second year. And this past year, we have focused on integrating the recommendations of the Initiative in key operations of the College in order to make sure that the efforts are not separated, isolated, or siloed, but instead fully seared into our core priorities. Only a subset of these many measures and ongoing projects are reflected in the responses below.

### *The Value of HEDS*

In fact, the HEDS survey was one of the recommendations that came from the Initiative steering committees. We observed the need for a full, simultaneous campus climate survey of students, faculty, and staff. The Diversity Committee implemented this recommendation. The survey confirmed the challenges we seek to address through the Initiative and a baseline from which to measure progress in the future from actions we take today. Last Friday, Nyree Gray, VP for

Human Relations and Chief Diversity Officer, provided a brief summary from the focus groups and promised a longer explanation of the comprehensive steps the College is taking to respond to the results.

### *Expansion and Support of our Black Community*

There can be no contradiction between our dual commitment to expand and support our Black community. Expansion of our student body, staff, faculty, alumni association, parent community, and Board is critical to the support of each member of our community. Over the past few years, we have expanded our Black student body, faculty, and Board.

In 2018, our Black student population was at 4% based on federal methodology. In 2022, our Black student population was at 6%. In 2018, 2% of the faculty identified as Black. In 2022, 5% of the faculty identified as Black. As of Friday, April 21, 2023, 11% of the members of the Board of Trustees identified as Black.

This progress is still too slow. We are implementing resources and strategies for student recruiting, and effectively applying our short- and long-term faculty hiring strategy and process, including in advancement of the Presidential Initiative.

### *Summer Internships and Experiences*

Last summer, we provided 512 sponsored summer internships and experiences (SIE), with a budget of \$2.3M, for a returning student body of approximately 1,000 students. Every first-year student on financial aid can take advantage of the SIE program, often with additional financial support to cover the financial aid summer savings requirement. The purpose of this program is to provide a significant experience to our rising sophomores and some rising juniors, not our rising seniors. Our strategy is two-fold. By concentrating our support on the first and second summers, we hope to give our students a strong leg up with professional or other significant experience, early in their college career, so that they can leverage that effectively in the marketplace before their senior year and in the post-graduate job market and opportunities for graduate school. Because of the pandemic and the weak job market in the summers of 2020 and 2021, we used surpluses from those years and, in 2022, stretched support for students who could not take advantage of these experiences in their earlier summers. We now are getting back to our pre-pandemic program. While that may appear to be a reduction in resources, it is not. While the budget varies depending on Institute participation annually, the average budget increased from \$1.3 to \$2.3 million over the past five years. In addition to external paid opportunities, there are on-campus jobs, paid research opportunities with faculty, and opportunities in other special programs.

That said, we understand that some students who have strong, even well-paid internships may still need additional assistance for housing and other expenses. We are working with our office of alumni and parent engagement to develop a program for our community to make in-kind contributions of housing that match a student's need. This may take another year to develop fully, but we are experimenting this summer.

### *Financial Aid*

Our financial aid budget and student awards have increased, not decreased. In 2017, we contributed 31.7% of gross tuition revenues to financial aid. In 2023, we contributed 38.7%. The net average price (family contribution) in 2016 was \$30,527. In the most recent year for which data is available (2021), the net price was \$21,663. This does not mean that our CMC students and families do not have formidable financial challenges. They do, and we strive continually to do better to meet them.

### *Insurance*

The Kravis Opportunity Fund, started in 2018, provides a wide range of financial support for students to take advantage of the full CMC experience. This includes: summer internships and experiences, emergency funding, technology grants, home equity relief, family travel, kick-off grants, and the cost of health care insurance for high need families. This budget is under pressure, too, given the cost of health care and the number of students eligible. In 2018, the budgeted support for the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) was \$75,000. This year it is \$200,000. Beyond fundraising, we are working on solutions, including increasing that proportion of Kravis Opportunity Funding, to meet the highest priority needs.

### *Curricula on The Black Experience in America*

The Initiative has supported the curricula in many ways. Many faculty members have used the Initiative's resources as a way to improve their own knowledge and skillset to build more inclusive classrooms. They have changed or added additional content to their courses, redesigned their assignments and grading processes, brought in speakers, and added additional research opportunities for students. An overall institutional hiring strategy that bridges the Presidential Initiative, approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2022, has also contributed to our recruitment efforts. I have asked the Curriculum Committee to provide an update on the development of our curriculum and the many new projects and courses spearheaded by the faculty across all departments in core introductory courses, the first-year seminars, majors, and other longer-term proposals they are developing.

On the general education curriculum, I share your sense of urgency and focus on the U.S. context. Please note that the Racial/Ethnic GE Proposal your letter endorses does not have a U.S. focus. In finding that specific proposal "insufficiently strong," the Board sent a strong statement of support for multiple ways to achieve these learning objectives.

Beyond support for the Initiative, the Board went further with an additional call for broader attention to other forms of social division, both nationally and globally. This does not mean we need one proposal or innovation. We need many. This does not mean that general education is the only vehicle. There are many. This does not mean that we either focus on race in the U.S. or social division globally. We can do both. Beyond the GE requirements, our introductory courses in economics, government, psychology, and other disciplines have increasingly strong treatments of race and ethnicity in the US. Beyond introductory courses, our majors increasingly ensure, as

appropriate, the incorporation of learning objectives on a wide variety of social divisions within their requirements.

In response to a recent motion passed by the faculty last Friday, I am confident that the Board will be eager to discuss, work, and collaborate with faculty who are committed to strengthening our curriculum and to creating opportunities for students to be part of the discussion.

### *Space*

Every student should feel that they belong in every space in our campus. When that does not occur, the need for time and space with others of a shared identity increases. The solution is to improve relationships and friendships on campus that make every inch of campus welcoming to each student. The provision of dedicated, exclusive space for affinity groups is not a sustainable or effective response or solution to the source of the behavior that creates the underlying need. With that understanding, we are fully aware of the need for improving space utilization in the CARE Center and have plans to increase seating capacity. We have also made additional campus space in the Heggblade annex available on a reservation basis and will continue to create other opportunities to meet demand. Ongoing, permanent, student-centric space needs are under constant consideration in our long-term master planning as well. Student input throughout is necessary and welcome.

### *ASCMC*

I support ASCMC's leadership and efforts in response to your letter to ensure supportive funding to student organizations. This past year, we approved ASCMC's proposal to raise student fees, which had been decreased during the pandemic. This will produce the revenue for enhanced support for student clubs and organizations.

### *Black International Student Support*

International students from around the globe are valued members of our community. CMC meets determined financial need for those who are admitted, and those financial aid awards are automatically renewed each year for up to eight semesters as long as students are enrolled full-time and make satisfactory academic progress toward their degree. We are working to align resources to further support our international students through early academic and career advisement to support their post-graduation opportunities.

Although CMC residence halls are closed during winter break, students who are from countries facing economic or political instability are invited to remain in campus housing free of charge, and this winter, those on financial aid were provided access to Janie's Kitchen and a stipend of \$420 to assist with food costs. Students were able to use money that would otherwise have been spent on flights home to supplement the College's food allowance. We also just secured a donor gift that supports the needs of international students, with a first focus on tackling the legal issues necessary to advance career and other professional objectives, and then a focus on additional advising support.

### *A Seat at CMC Tables*

The Board will not create a student trustee position. However, there are many opportunities to contribute to the work of the Board of Trustees.

ASCMC initiates a process each spring for all students to apply for seats on several Board committees, including College Advancement, Academic Affairs, Campus Planning and Facilities, and Student Affairs.

Students serve with faculty and staff on CMC committees, including Curriculum Committee, Global Education Committee, Admission and Financial Aid Committee, Committee on Academic Computing, Athenaeum Advisory Committee, Diversity Committee, and the Conduct Board.

Students also have opportunities for direct engagement with College leadership through ASCMC in both formal and informal ways, and work is underway to expand those opportunities.

### *Internal Communications*

As I indicated at the beginning of this response, I agree that our internal communication and social relationships across all domains—using every tool we have (e.g., outgoing social warmth in our interactions, open doors, websites, orientations, announcements, forums, updates, social invitations, discussions, community forums, roundtables, focus groups, informed answers to pressing questions)—must be stronger and more effective to earn the trust and facilitate the vast social and intellectual exchange we need to meet our commitments and to ensure respect for each member of our community. I am eager to work with our AVP for Strategic Communications, Megan Jordan, and each and every one of you to strengthen these capabilities. More on that soon.