

June 1, 2020 Update from the Vice President and Dean

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on behalf of

Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension Weekly Bulletin

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Mon 6/1/2020 3:59 PM

To: alvsce_bulletin@list.cals.arizona.edu <alvsce_bulletin@list.cals.arizona.edu>

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Today I want to talk about where we are this week in our enterprise and to recognize some people. But first I want to talk about recent events that have rightly and justly become more important.

Once again, we have come face-to-face with abhorrent reality and know we must face it, as individuals and as a society, and simply say "enough is enough". I know this with tears of sadness and frustration in my eyes for all who face prejudice, injustice and lack of hope *simply because of how they look*.

People living in free and equitable societies do not fear walking on a street because of their skin color, accent, dress, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs, political beliefs, socioeconomic and educational background, or any other differences that could be used to promote tribalism and suppression of any kind. I cannot imagine what it must be like to fear for my son's life were he to pulled over by a police officer while driving--but I have a good friend who can imagine it with his sons, because it has happened to him. I have experienced being the only person with my skin color for weeks on end, but I cannot imagine what it's like to grow up where my skin color is different to most others' *and is used to predict my lack of potential*. Regardless of my personal lived experience, or your experiences, I implore you not only to confront and reject prejudice and discrimination, but to take proactive action to be inclusive all the time, everywhere you are.

George Floyd's murder is shocking. It shakes to our core our faith and trust in those charged with protecting us. I am angry because of the actions of four police officers. I want to believe their actions are not representative of the majority. I still support the vast majority of the people in our uniformed services, especially our first responders, who are doing so much for us every day. I know people in uniform who are as appalled and even more angry than I am over this horrific event. They will be on the streets doing their jobs protecting everyone, even while their hearts are with those protesting. I want them to come home safely to their families.

I ask everyone to exercise your democratic rights. Say "enough is enough" and say it loudly. Please make your voice heard without prejudice and without violence against people or property. *Be the change that we all demand must happen*.

These last few months we have been the change needed as we have carried on our education, Extension and research with the Land-Grant University ideals of equity, accessibility and inclusiveness.

Our summer sessions are now in full swing with our teaching faculty and staff continuing 100% online instruction. Our Extension staff and faculty continue delivering the programs and services they provide year-round. Our research is ramping back up.

On Friday, I met with our Ag100 Council. Our stakeholders and donors, many of whom are alums, wanted me to tell you how proud they are to be associated with you. The work you are doing is improving lives, communities and economies around this state. It is a positive source for good.

These last 11 weeks have felt at times like a tornado with trees and outbuildings hurtling by while we seek shelter and wait to see what kind of damage there will be on the ground when the storm has passed. I want to take a moment today to thank all of you who have led from formal and informal positions. You know who you are. Keep doing it!

Fragmented information comes at us from every direction. It changes quickly, rumors need correcting, and every decision can have serious impacts on our budget and safety. I want you to know what I do already: your colleagues are fighting hard to make sure your interests are factored into every decision that needs to be made. I deeply appreciate how much they have given of themselves at this time.

Regards,
Shane

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