

Dear Fenwick Community,

In the wake of the killing of George Floyd and widespread protests around the country, Fenwick High School has also been asked to examine itself.

The outpouring of anger, pain and frustration from so many of Fenwick's alumni and students of color over the past few weeks has been deafening. We have heard and are deeply saddened.

It is clear that we have failed our students of color, and all of our students, in many ways. If we are to educate our students - as our vision statement reads - "to serve as compassionate leaders, committed to justice and peace in a changing global society," we must change. As an educational institution Fenwick must play its part in implementing and upholding anti-racist policies, practices and curriculum to educate the leaders of tomorrow. We are committed to doing so.

It is easy to state that Fenwick stands firmly against institutional racism embedded in all aspects of society and it will not be tolerated at Fenwick. It is harder to live the tenets of the Gospel and the life of Jesus Christ to personify the moral truth that Black Lives Matter, that Brown Lives Matter. That is what we must do.

At its June 15 board meeting, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee of the board, a permanent committee, was appointed and board chair John Barron '76 will serve on it. A formal charter is being established, but the committee will be charged with addressing racial/cultural and justice/equity issues in these areas:

- Cultural Inclusion and Sensitivity Training
- Policy and Governing Practices
- Curriculum
- Student, Faculty, Staff Recruitment
- Admissions and Financial Aid
- Community Service

The committee's first meeting is Tuesday, June 30. An alumnus from the class of '03, who has spent the bulk of his professional career working with issues of diversity, equity and inclusion in education, has agreed to moderate the initial meeting until a chair is formally named. The committee is made up of current and past board members, faculty and staff, alumni and current students. The committee is expected to reach beyond the traditional Fenwick community for expertise, counsel and advice when seeking information and making recommendations.

This committee's work will take some time, but Fenwick commits to the following now:

- A school-wide cultural sensitivity and inclusion training program for all students, faculty, staff, administration and the board will be implemented in the '20-21 school year. *Note: Cultural inclusion and sensitivity training already has been scheduled for Board members, and Mr. Moland is researching options for school-wide training.*
- Multi-disciplinary curriculum changes to include greater diversity of perspective and

multi-cultural pedagogy.

- Fenwick will re-double its efforts to raise scholarship funds for underserved students. *Note: Fenwick recently formalized another scholarship fund for students matriculating from two elementary schools that largely serve students from the Austin neighborhood on Chicago's west side.*

We welcome and appreciate your feedback. Please continue to share your experiences at inclusion@fenwickfriars.com. All of your stories will be shared with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

As a Dominican high school, Fenwick is committed to live up to the ideals of the earliest Dominicans who came to the Americas in the 16th century. As we were reminded at the recent board meeting in an essay by Elisa Flores '20 about the Order of the Preachers in the New World:

“Antonio Montesinos and Francisco de Vitoria were both influential figures who greatly contributed to the idea of Dominicans fighting for and preaching about human rights in the New World. Montesinos’ sermon and de Vitoria’s contributions both argue against slavery on the basis of human dignity and Dominican values. Together, they were able to shape the minds of their contemporaries by emphasizing and appreciating the importance of basic human rights.”

Fenwick High School will live up to this legacy in the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Fr. Richard Peddicord, O.P.
President

John Barron '76
Board Chair