November 2, 2020

It is the day before the general election and millions of Americans are exercising their fundamental right to choose the next president of the United States. People are also casting their ballots for many other candidates at the federal, state and local levels. This has perhaps been one of the most contentious election seasons in our nation’s history, with great significance for our country.

Regardless of the outcomes, important work remains to be done. The underlying issues that created persistent inequities, disparities and unrest in our country will remain if we, as Americans, become complacent after this election.

Black Lives Matter — today and every day, and through all election cycles. Our colleges will continue to tackle systemic racism and dismantle institutional barriers for students of color. All students deserve to accomplish the dreams that brought them to our doors.

We are proud to be part of the fabric of our local communities, home to people from all walks of life, belief systems, origins and identities. Diversity in all its forms is our nation’s greatest asset.

As higher education institutions, we will continue to advance critical thinking, foster courageous conversations, and provide a platform for communities to learn from, and about, one another.

Community and technical colleges are, after all, democracy’s colleges. We were built from the idea that people from all backgrounds and incomes should have the right to higher education. We were created in the knowledge that education empowers people, builds better lives and creates stronger communities. Our students are the key to building a bright future for America, with a stronger and more inclusive economy.

As we navigate the next weeks and months, let us remember that our nation’s fate is not only determined by those who hold the highest positions, but by the everyday actions of the people who make up the fabric of our country. America’s character is built by the moment-by-moment decisions to choose kindness over cruelty, action over complacency, generosity over self-centeredness and community over division.

These qualities are on shining display at commencement ceremonies, where friends and family members express sheer joy not just for their own loved ones, but for all the students. Even during this historic pandemic, when many ceremonies have temporarily moved online, this goodwill shines through; we bring out the best in ourselves for others.

Let’s continue to reach out across our differences, come together and create the world in which we want to live. Combined, the individual ripples we create will build into a wave that moves our college communities, and our nation, forward.

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