

June 30, 2020

Dear Members of the Black Alumni Council,

I write today in the spirit of what will ultimately chart the path for the next phase of growth and development at the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. Like each of you, I continue to agonize over the recent murders of unarmed black men and women throughout our nation, the painful history that sanctioned such events, and the level of ambivalence that has nurtured the environment allowing such incidents to continue.

Much in the same way as I did prior to my initial communication with you, I've taken the opportunity to reflect upon your concerns and their relevance to where we are as a state and nation. Although I can think of countless responses for each requested action, it has been through this level of thought that I am also able to more clearly see the level of pain and uncertainty that has caused such a level of discontent with your experience on this campus. Over the course of my lifetime, I have unfortunately experienced the heavy hand of racism and discrimination more times than I care to remember, and I know that those feelings of torture never subside. We will unfortunately bear those scars for the rest of our lives.

First, I wish to thank those of you who accepted my invitation to discuss your concerns and have honest and open dialogue regarding potential avenues for improvement. These meetings were truly meaningful and insightful to me, allowing for a much-needed initial conversation on issues that you have faced and those that we are able to address immediately. For those who were unable to participate in these discussions, I again welcome your participation as your schedule permits, as I value every opinion and seek to learn from each of you.

Without question, we must make transformative change at the Governor's School in not only being the thought leader for arts education in our state, but also leading the charge for advancing social justice and anti-racism in South Carolina. In line with our institutional mission and our commitment to serving all 46 counties across South Carolina, we are uniquely positioned to do this alongside our work in developing the next generation of young artists in the state.

The Board of Directors, Leadership Team, employees, and I are fully committed to all that is necessary to improve, correct, and realign any and all structural and systematic processes that have caused harm or prevented full access to what was intended to have been a fully equitable experience for our students and all members of the Governor's School community. If we are to indeed be the leading artistic and academic institution that we could and should be, then we must make significant change as a learning community. Regardless of the level of accomplishment that we have made in recent years, we further commit to and recognize the work that lies ahead and the critical nature of acting swiftly and immediately. With this in mind we stand in solidarity in addressing the needs of our students, past, present, and future.

In support of our commitment to addressing the diversity of the Governor's School community, we will:

- Expand the diversity of our faculty and staff with particular emphasis on recruiting, hiring, supporting, and retaining Black and Indigenous people of color.
- Expand the diversity of our student population with particular emphasis on recruiting, supporting, and retaining Black and Indigenous students of color.
- Enhancing our financial assistance program to ensure that all programs are accessible to Black and Indigenous students of color.

In support of our commitment to addressing our environment to embrace anti-racism, equity, and inclusion to foster a more inclusive environment for all members of the Governor's School community, we will:

- Establish and implement an in-depth, on-going diversity and anti-racism training for every member of the faculty, staff, and student body with a focus on anti-racist principles, appropriate responses to racial conflict, harm reduction, and racial privilege.
- Incorporate the study of anti-racism and the African diaspora across our curriculum in the arts, humanities, and academics with a special focus on race in the growth and transformation of the arts.

In support of our commitment to addressing long-term structural systems to renew our vision for change, we will:

- Enhance support systems for every member of the faculty, staff, and student body who are experiencing conflicts with racism, sexism, or social justice in any form.
- Establish and implement a program of coordinated surveys of our faculty, staff, and student body to assess and inform our status and progress in addressing concerns of diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- Assess the structure of our organizational leadership.
- Hold leadership and all employees accountable through the annual review process for ensuring a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable campus.

In support of our commitment to our alumni who are Black and Indigenous people of color, we will:

- Expand our engagement through on-going communication with alumni who are Black and Indigenous people of color.
- Provide additional opportunities for alumni who are Black and Indigenous people of color to engage with students on campus.
- Assist in mobilizing alumni to be agents of change for the Governor's School.
- Enhance our relationships with our state's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (South Carolina State University, Claflin University, Benedict College, and Allen University).

It is critical that we recognize that these actions simply lay the groundwork for what is necessary for change at the Governor's School and are the first of many successive initiatives. Beyond what we can establish and implement immediately, it is critical that we quickly engage with the leadership of the Black Alumni Council to outline a formal process to address additional concerns raised by your letter. The Board of Directors, Leadership Team, and campus personnel wish to engage with you to ensure that action steps and measures are designed to appropriately respond to what is required of us. To that end, we invite the Black Alumni Council to designate members who will

participate with the Board, campus leadership, and other members of the Govie community in a Working Group with the goal of engaging in a deliberate process to define further actions. I hope that there are members of the Black Alumni Council who will genuinely participate in this process with the goal of bringing about substantive change and ensuring continuous improvement for the benefit of our students, as they deserve the best experience possible when entrusted to our community. To begin the process, I request that the Black Alumni Council respond with a list of members and contact information who are willing to participate in this process and work alongside us.

I regret that much of what we have accomplished in diversifying our community and providing a more just and equitable experience remains unknown by many. This work is certainly cherished and appreciated by those who have become true-to-form partners in our efforts to more adequately serve our students and all stakeholders within the Governor's School community. We are committed to redoubling those efforts in support of our students and to communicating the success of these initiatives to you and all members of the Governor's School community. Your knowledge of this work and, hopefully, your participation will be vital to the continued service of students. I invite you to review our work at the following link – <https://www.scgsah.org/diversity>.

I anticipate that the immediate and subsequent changes for us will be even more vibrant and enriching than one can imagine. We pledge to uphold our commitment to a truly inclusive and equitable learning community while being forever mindful of the historical and cultural context of what we have perceived as success and what we now recognize as failures. By design, we will certainly be excellent in the arts and academics as we have been for over twenty years. By choice, we will not only meet the needs of our students of color, but exceed the expectations for a world-class academic experience free from racism, bigotry, and discrimination in any form. I look forward to carving out the future of the Governor's School with each of you.

Sincerely,

Cedric L. Adderley, DMA
President

