



HARTNELL COLLEGE

Memo from the Interim Superintendent/President

DATE: September 2, 2020
TO: All Employees
FROM: Raúl Rodríguez, Ph.D.
RE: Anti-Racism

Dear Colleagues,

It came to my attention today that a faculty member earlier this week sent out a message to all faculty with a reference to the COVID-19 pandemic as the "Chinese virus epidemic." This kind of reference is unacceptable in my view. Although freedom of speech is a constitutional right afforded to individuals in our country, it does not confer an absolute right to speak irresponsibly nor does it provide a license for or immunity from every possible use of language. The unfortunate words this person chose to employ to describe the COVID-19 pandemic are both demeaning and hurtful to many people, but especially to those of Chinese descent.

Earlier this year when I was the Interim President at East Los Angeles College and the COVID-19 pandemic was first beginning to have an effect, I discovered that some of the faculty at that college were singling out Asian students and sending them to the campus health center to be tested for COVID-19 before they would admit them to their classes. This behavior was wrong on multiple levels, but the main problem was that these students were treated in a differential and adverse manner just because of the way they looked. I acted swiftly to put a stop to it because none of our students deserve to be treated in that manner.

Similarly, if we are serious about anti-racism, then we can't ignore or condone the use of language that singles out a particular group and blames the entire group for a specific event. Such profiling-type behavior perpetuates stereotypes, bias, and racism. Hartnell is better than that. We can all do better than that.

With respect for all,