

September 13, 2020

Cabrillo College Governing Board
Cabrillo College Sesnon House
6500 Soquel Drive
Aptos, California 95003

Re: Cabrillo Hispanic Affairs Council Support of Name Change for Cabrillo College

Dear Cabrillo College Board Members,

On August 19, 2020, Cabrillo Hispanic Affairs Council (CHAC) voted unanimously to support the effort to change the name of the college. The rationale for doing so was well documented at the July 20, 2020, board meeting at which many spoke in support of this endeavor.

CHAC does not take this issue lightly. We understand that changing the name of the college will not have an immediate impact on the persistent racism and inequities that many of our students and their families must deal with on a regular basis. Change doesn't work that way. However, beginning the process is absolutely essential at this moment in our culture.

Many of our membership have had direct experience with being treated as second-class citizens in our own country -- as outsiders. For many of us, our educational experience, from kindergarten to high school, reinforced this sense of ostracism. Not only were we made to feel invisible, but our history was denigrated as being inconsequential. In effect, we were told that we had no history.

The naming of the college after Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo is yet another example of this one-sided view of history -- celebrating European achievements, while rarely mentioning those of Native Peoples. Cabrillo was part and parcel of a process of conquest that brought on the near complete destruction of Native American societies throughout the Americas. His participation in the violent conquest of the Americas and the destruction on Native communities have been well documented.

By having Cabrillo emblazoned on this institution of higher learning, we legitimize the false narrative that he arrived here as a bearer of civilization, moral righteousness, and enlightenment. We are an institution whose goal it is to prepare students to take on responsibilities in a society that is increasingly multicultural and multiracial. A society that demands civic participation and engagement with one another on an equitable basis. Communities throughout the nation, of all ethnic backgrounds, are today demanding that American society recognize the humanity in all of us. There is an

intense demand, especially by young people, that basic human rights, respect, and decency play out in how we treat each other. Words matter. Actions matter. Symbols matter. And, so do names.

There is much that the college has done to embrace its diverse student body. Examples include, and not limited to, courses that speak to the experiences of communities of color, changes to curriculum through Guided Pathways, establishment of an Office of Equity, HSI status and funding to support programming for all of our students, the Watsonville Center and its outreach to the surrounding community, etc. These have been positive outcomes for the college and for the community as a whole. These changes have come about from deliberate steps implemented with the intention to change the culture of the campus, to better student outcomes, and to embrace the totality of our diverse demographic. Not everyone has been happy with all the changes, but change is never easy.

CHAC wishes to work with the Board in whatever capacity it can to make this process fair and open. We understand that the process will take time and that all stakeholders must be consulted and brought into the fold. We want this to work. Other institutions, from schools to professional sports teams, have been successful in these efforts, so we know this can be done.

We look forward to working with you.

Respectfully,

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