Dear Members of the UMass Boston Community,

The focus of this week’s letter from the Academic Continuity Task Force (ACTF) is community. In the month leading up to the start of the new academic year, we look to the future and more collaboratively contributing to the process of restorative justice.

**Welcome to Marcelo Suárez-Orozco**

The ACTF joins the rest of the campus community in welcoming Marcelo Suárez-Orozco as our new Chancellor. We look forward to working with him as UMass Boston moves into a new transformative chapter. Chancellor Suárez-Orozco comes to UMass Boston as an impressive scholar and leader in higher education whose life and work embody the values that define our institution. We are honored that renowned scholar Carola Suárez-Orozco, our Chancellor's partner, is joining the College of Education and Human Development as a Distinguished Professor in Counseling and School Psychology.

**Stewardship of Our Diverse Community**

Maintaining our focus on commitment to action, in this week’s letter, we would like to focus on a facet of the official **mission and values of our university**: Diversity. We take pride in our multi-faceted diversity as an educational asset to all of us in our community. In the context of our mission’s declaration that "we value and provide a learning environment that nurtures respect for differences, excites curiosity, and embodies civility," we recognize the importance of community stewardship and cultural humility in our intentions, plans, and actions. Included here are ways that our campus community is enacting stewardship by creating organized collaborative efforts and engaging in shared experiences that equitably benefit the community as productive ways of strengthening our connections and commitments to one another.

Following the success of participation by 134 UMass Boston educators in the
SpeakOut Institute in mid-July, we are excited to share an announcement of another SpeakOut event that is highly relevant to our university this Thursday, August 6, at 4 p.m., which most ACTF members will be attending. Dr. Fania Davis will present on the theme of “Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and Social Transformation.” Tickets for this 1-hour presentation cost $5 minimum (SpeakOut accepts up to $25), and are available here.

Students are central to community stewardship. The vast majority of students in our community are themselves or are closely connected to people who have been most adversely affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that is occurring in the midst of the centuries-old pandemic of racial injustice. Student leadership, in collaboration with a variety of student affairs and student life offices on campus, have organized an entire week of (virtual) action this week, Monday, August 3 through Friday, August 7, to create accessibility for all members of our campus community to engage with one another and within all our communities beyond UMass Boston. All students, staff, and faculty are encouraged to participate in the Week of Action activities, which are highlighted here.

We also recognize that the support of access as opportunity is stewarded by our magnificent cadre of staff at our university, who are essential for inclusive and equitable community-building. We are grateful for the depth and scope of their knowledge, efforts, and ideas about how best to sustain our academic enterprise while working remotely in a time of multiple crises. Many staff members have reached out to ACTF expressing ideas about how best to fulfill their roles while working remotely and with greater impacted students in light of our current pandemic and its various hardships. In line with these requests and ideas, ACTF is pleased to highlight that the university is providing support through access to the necessary equipment and supplies needed to fulfill job responsibilities remotely. As noted in a campus communication on July 25, employees are now able to retrieve from campus certain equipment, supplies and materials that will support their remote work. The details and requirements of this new temporary policy can be found here. Questions can be directed to: controllers.office@umb.edu.

**Promoting Communication**

We are happy to announce that Class Notes have begun being posted on courses in WISER. Within the Class Notes, students will find modality information that includes the extent to which each class will have synchronous (in real-time) and asynchronous (not real-time, but will have time deadlines) components, and how attendance will work. Technology information includes what types of technology will
be needed to access the class, which will answer questions like: Can I use a Chromebook (with CloudPC) or do I need a laptop computer? Will a smartphone work for accessing the class? Class Notes are being updated in WISER as quickly as possible.

The ACTF is grateful to members of our campus community who have shared concerns, questions, and suggestions as we prepare for the start of the academic year. We have created an additional avenue for sharing information that will automatically allow for anonymity and will assist us in compiling results more effectively. The ACTF email address (ACTF@umb.edu) continues to be available and is monitored by a single individual who maintains confidentiality. Starting this week, for individuals who wish to share concerns anonymously with the ACTF, we are launching a form. Information submitted by either mechanism is confidential.

We encourage you to check out resources for students, staff, and faculty that are accumulating on the Resources4U site. This site provides a collection of resources focused on UMass Boston student success.

We are honored to be serving UMass Boston and look forward to keeping you engaged with our work as it progresses. Please be well, safe, strong, and resolute as we navigate these unprecedented times together and strive to be, both in our planning and in our practice, a just, equitable, and inclusive community.

Sincerely,

Joseph B. Berger
Lillian-Yvonne Bertram
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Robin Côté
John Duff
Maria H. Ivanova
Rafael Jaen
Keith R. Jones
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