Black Lives Matter
Message from the Dean

College of Agricultural Sciences at OSU:

As a white man in a position of leadership, I have benefitted from much privilege in my life. As I see yet another outpouring of grief and anger from violence against Black people, I find myself sympathizing but also not feeling like I can even come close to understanding the full breadth of their hurt and fear and frustration. No matter how much I feel that Black lives matter, I can never know the daily emotional stress and physical danger they and other people of color endure.

However, I can do some things. I can speak out. Hear my voice. Yes, Black Lives Matter. I can control my own thoughts and actions, which, even after countless bias trainings, can and will always need to improve. As a spouse, parent and citizen, I can hopefully influence those around me in a positive way, through example, through dialogue, and through voting. As a leader, I can do my best to improve the organization I lead through its culture, policies, and practices regarding its faculty, staff and students, particularly how they support or impose bias against those of color. I see you, hear you and value you.

While some things will be cultural changes we will get to work on, one thing faculty should do now is to recognize that the emotional and physical demands on our students be considered as they need flexibility in assignments, grading and responsibilities completing their courses this term. Provost Feser gave specific guidance on this in his memo on June 3 (available at https://leadership.oregonstate.edu/provost/from-the-provost). This applies to Ecampus students too. Students can already request a course be S/U so I encourage faculty and students to talk about options.

Going forward, I commit this College to reexamining our culture and operations, including how they reflect or fall short in areas identified by the ongoing campus climate survey. Addressing bias, building representation of Black and all people of color in our numbers, and enhancing dialogue will be among the areas on which we will focus. We will listen, we will respond, we will take action. Because the status quo is not enough.

The work of dismantling racism and achieving racial equity starts within each of us – within the hearts of all individuals and within the walls of all institutions, including the College of Agricultural Sciences. But it cannot be realized unless each of us is supported. While we recognize that what that support looks like is different depending on our own individual history and journey, we know it is critical. I encourage all in this, the founding college of OSU, to join me in this effort. Let’s make tomorrow better.

Alan Sams