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## Interview request with campus President Jeffrey D. Armstrong re. Black student enrollment

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Matt Lazier <[REDACTED]>  
To: Mikhail Zinshteyn <mikhail@calmatters.org>  
[REDACTED]

Wed, Nov 9, 2022 at 3:58 PM

Thanks, Mikhail. I connected with several of our senior administrators with your question. Please see the response below on behalf of the university.

We care deeply about the experience of our students of color and work hard to make them feel welcome and supported on our campus, though we acknowledge there is much more work to do. And we unequivocally abhor and denounce racist speech and actions, which hurt our students and employees and slow our efforts to make Cal Poly the more inclusive, diverse and welcoming campus community it must be. Unfortunately, the reality is that racism exists throughout our society, including on our campus.

Cal Poly administrators and staff engage in ongoing discussions with our students and employees of color to hear their voices and address their concerns as appropriate. This is an ongoing part of the university's overall pursuit of continued improvement campuswide.

Specific to campus culture, prior to the pandemic, the university engaged a consultant to help us perform a campus climate survey, aimed at identifying areas for improvement and developing plans to address diversity, equity and inclusion at Cal Poly overall. That follow-up work is ongoing through the university's [Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#).

This truly is a work in progress. The university has made strides, but there is a lot of hard work ahead of us still. And campus culture and the diversity of our student body and work force go hand in hand. As we improve in one area, we will see positive effects in the other, and vice versa. Make no mistake: Improving DEI on our campus is a moral imperative. Cal Poly is a California State University; to truly serve the residents of California, as is our mission, we must better reflect the state — including its ethnic makeup.

Specific to your question, we would make it clear that the university cannot address issues of bias or racism if it is not informed of them. So, we encourage our students to let us know when they have these experiences. The university has several avenues where students can report a variety of experiences involving racism or bias. These include (but are not limited to):

- A cross-divisional [Bias Incident Response Team](#), which looks into reports, provides support to affected students, and refers incidents to other appropriate offices or authorities for additional action.
- The [Civil Rights and Compliance Office](#), where campus community members can report issues of discrimination or harassment (including Title IX complaints).
- [Student Ombuds Services](#), which provides a resource for students to resolve any university-related issue, concern, conflict or complaint.
- The [Dean of Students' Office](#), which provides a variety of support services to Cal Poly students.
- The [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), which enforces the university's student conduct policies.
- The [Cal Poly Police Department](#) which enforces criminal law and investigates possible violations on campus.

Cal Poly will always provide affected students with support services in the wake of a bias incident. And the university will investigate these matters and respond to them appropriately, to the extent it is able.

With that in mind, it is important to note the limitations the university faces in disciplining any campus community member for racist speech. Cal Poly is a state institution, and we are bound by law to uphold the First Amendment rights of those who study, work, visit, or live on our campus — even those whose individual opinions or statements we find repugnant and counter to the university's values.

Instead, the university will continue the pursuit of DEI improvement throughout our campus and curriculum, to make our voices of acceptance so loud and our efforts toward inclusion so pervasive that there can be no questioning Cal Poly's stance of dignity and respect for all members of our community.

[Quoted text hidden]