

August 21, 2020

We Fly, Together - Message from the Interim Chief Diversity Officer

Dear Seahawks,

As we enter a new semester, we find ourselves in an unexpected reality, one that has changed the ways we live our day-to-day lives. When we parted ways last spring, we left at the beginning of a global pandemic while witnessing our nation grapple with ever-present racial injustice. Just a few weeks ago, I stepped into the role of Interim Chief Diversity Officer and, quite honestly, wondered how we could move forward as a campus and a country. As a Black woman who watched her grandparents struggle to access quality education, I speak to you from that historical place, always cognizant of the histories we carry. We face this year continuing to learn, saying Black Lives Matter, knowing that in this time and space, that belief confronts the painful racist history of this nation. We speak that belief to affirm the dignity of our colleagues, family and friends who have lived their entire lives fighting against presumptions of inferiority.

If you are returning to campus or are new to the Seahawk family, know that we value the voice of each individual. We know that each of you brings your own histories, your own struggles, your own dreams. I imagine that many of you have been desperately searching for some inspiration. For me, that inspiration comes from students—those of you who ask us the tough questions, who debate, critique and challenge us to rethink. In this moment, I challenge us to remember that inspiration often comes from the struggle, from those moments when we have to claim who we are and who we dare to be. It comes when, despite the chaos, we can stay still long enough to hear each other, to find inspiration from those who came before us and those who sit beside us.

How do we come back together, still facing a global health crisis, knowing that there are those among us who continue to feel diminished and unheard? We speak up, day by day, remembering our distinctiveness as individuals while believing in the power of the collective. And, in those times when we cannot speak, we know that someone sees us, hears us, and speaks for us. With honesty and grace, honoring the dignity of each other, we are UNCW.

We fly, together.

Wings up, Seahawks.

Donyell L. Roseboro, Ph.D.

Professor and Interim Chief Diversity Officer