

**The following statement was made by DAS President Leigh Anne Shaw at the Board of Trustees meeting Sept 13, 2017. The statement is a response to an incident of racial insensitivity occurring at Skyline College in May of 2017 and the subsequent events that culminated in a faculty presentation to the BOT on August 23, 2017.**

The last few weeks have been full of thoughtful and heavy conversations in the senates regarding the blackface incident at Skyline College that occurred in Spring of this year. Most faculty, myself included, learned of it on August 23<sup>rd</sup> with an email from the faculty union, and many have reported being shocked, bewildered, and deeply concerned for our students and community. There have been many questions, concerns, interpretations, and opinions formed based on the quantity and quality of information that was provided. At Skyline College's senate meeting on Sept 7, nuanced details of the event and its aftermath were offered by faculty in attendance. It is my great regret that the burden of explaining these nuances fell to faculty colleagues who were already experiencing much trauma from the incident, and I am grateful to them for their bravery and willingness to be so vulnerable in order to help their colleagues understand. Following that discussion, many faculty found their understanding of the situation to be quite transformed from what it had been based on the information previously provided. The District Senate was grateful to have Pres. Tom Mohr and Pres. Regina Stanback-Stroud join our meeting on Sept 11 for a lengthy discussion of what the senate can do to move our community forward. While all three campuses have varying levels of understanding and reaction to the incident, several things have been commonly expressed by faculty districtwide:

- 1) This is a teaching issue; therefore, it is a senate issue. The senates were not brought in at first, but they are now all three very much engaged in inserting themselves into this issue to begin healing our community and bolstering our educational offerings for faculty and students alike;
- 2) Our campuses would do well to discuss our roles in perpetuating violence and inequity through ignorance, complaisance, and inability to discuss racial issues. We don't expect each other to be perfect, but we do expect each other to be committed to providing a safe and respectful classroom community;
- 3) There needs to be a discussion about the legal counsel that was provided to the faculty member in question, counsel that was paid for by faculty union dues. Many faculty, though not all, learned that these acts of racial insensitivity were defended under the banner of academic freedom; such a defense is abhorrent, and this has tremendous implications for the trust that faculty have placed in our representation.

I would like to close by assuring the board that the senates are united in our goal to ensure an educational environment that is rooted in social justice, and we eagerly reach out districtwide to students, staff, and administration to collaborate on a way to move towards healing.