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## VCCS Announces Actions It Will Take Following George Floyd's Murder and Subsequent Protests

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George Floyd's indefensible death, and the demonstrations it has inspired, demand more than thoughts and prayers. They demand action. We owe it to our African American students, faculty, staff, supporters, and friends to say that we see you, and that we see your pain. And we need to share what Virginia's Community Colleges can do to contribute solutions moving forward.

Equity and access to opportunity have been at the heart of our community college mission since we first opened our doors in 1966. However, our efforts to translate those ideals into action for all Virginians have not always yielded the results that we seek as quickly as we would like. Simply stated, we must do better, and we will.

To that end, I am immediately charging a task force, now working under the leadership of Dr. Anne Kress, president of Northern Virginia Community College, and Dr. Sharon Morrissey, senior vice chancellor of academic and workforce programs for the VCCS, to expand their scope and place a priority emphasis on equity in all that our colleges do for students, ranging from access to completion, and beyond. This group is creating our next six-year statewide strategic plan, and I am charging them with creating both goals and measurable strategies for increasing equity across our 23 colleges.

I am also asking that group to create goals and measurable strategies for increasing diversity in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of community college faculty, staff, and administrators. We know that students do better and achieve more when they can see themselves in their instructors. We must do more to see the communities that we serve reflected within our employee ranks.

Further, I am creating a separate panel to examine the curricula that we use to educate law enforcement officers across our 23 colleges. Collectively, we are one of Virginia's largest providers of law enforcement personnel, enrolling nearly 2,200 students last year.

Dr. Quentin Johnson, president of Southside Virginia Community College will lead this effort, working with community leaders and law enforcement officials to ensure that we are doing all that we can to train officers who can effectively protect, serve, and earn the trust of every Virginia community.

The protests and riots occurring across the nation remind me of those I lived through during the 1960s, and they sadly illustrate just how little things have changed since then. We need to invest ourselves, and our colleges, in actions that elevate equity before we can realize the rhetorical promise of equality – and that work begins now.