

Modesto Junior College
Academic Senate Resolution SU20-C:
Humanizing Language/Discourse

Proposed by: Ariana Gonzalez, Ruth Luman, Aishah Saleh, and Rob Stevenson

Whereas: The California Community Colleges calls for our [#CAcommunitycolleges](#) to actively strategize and take action against structural racism. Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley called for action across six key areas and said “we cannot hide behind collegiality” in a recent system webinar. Watch the entire webinar at <https://bit.ly/2YubnnY>. Language reflects the values of an institution and its stance toward inclusivity (consider the recent Call to Action in which Chancellor Oakley specifically highlighted the importance of the inclusion of undocumented students); and

Whereas: Whereas, “As a district, we are uniquely blessed, and enriched by the talents, and contributions of all of our students and employees, regardless of their ethnicity or national origins, or immigration status. We welcome all, and we serve all” (Chancellor Yong to the Board of Trustees 9/13/17); and

Whereas: Language molds and influences thought and impacts perceptions and behavior toward others (Alim, et. al.; Boroditsky; Wei, et. al.); and

Whereas: Speech in the public business of or on behalf of the institution is subject to district, state, and federal policy, statute, and law, and is herein recognized as professional discourse, separate from one’s first amendment rights as a private citizen or from academic freedom in the classroom or other educational space; and

Whereas: MJC [publicly declares itself](#) as an UndocuAlly “We are proud to serve undocumented students because we believe in upholding student equity as we support you and your goals”; and

Whereas: “Modesto Junior College is comprised of a diverse student population including native-born individuals, undocumented students, and immigrants and refugees from all over the world, and is a federally designated Hispanic-serving institution located in a county which is one of eight refugee-impacted counties in California and in which one out of every five residents is foreign born, and over forty percent speak a native language other than English” (S-17B); and

Whereas: We, the Academic Senate of Modesto Junior College resolved in S-17B: Resolution for Undocumented “that the College and District encourage, undertake, and advocate for educational opportunities for all students regardless of documentation status, racial, ethnic, language, or religious background as well as publicly and explicitly create a welcoming environment for all students.”; and

Whereas: We affirm the dignity inherent in all of us, and we strive to maintain a climate of equity and justice demonstrated by respect for one another. We acknowledge that our society carries

within its historical and deep-rooted injustices and biases. (UC Davis Principles of Community)

Whereas: Statements and recommendation on this subject fall within faculty responsibility in YCCD District Policy 7-8049 in “rely primarily” item E-faculty professional development and “mutual agreement” item B-student preparation and success); and

Therefore: Be it resolved, that we **discourage** the use of the words “alien” and “illegal” as adjectives to define, reference, or categorize people in professional discourse at the institution.

Therefore: Be it resolved, that we that we develop best practices for discussion around inclusive and equitable terms to assist the institution in having rigorous and sometimes difficult, sensitive, or controversial conversations. This will encourage open discourse while fostering a more inclusive culture and help avoid language that may cause dehumanization, marginalization, or a bias against or misrepresentation of particular student populations. As part of an institutional commitment to equity, certain terms can be examined or re-examined in order to preserve a sense of dignity and value of those who attend and work at the institution and added to the guide on a regular basis through discussion and consensus of the Academic Senate. The discussion around the addition of new terms/language can act as opportunities for continued education and further dialogue.

Therefore: Be it resolved, that immigration status be added to the Faculty Handbook Nondiscrimination Statement, and

Therefore: Be it further resolved, that the position of this body is that immigration status be added to all appropriate district policies as a group protected from discrimination.

First Reading: July 16, 2020

Final Reading: September 17, 2020

Disposition: Carried