

**From:** Official ESU Email

**Sent:** Monday, September 14

**Subject:** Message to ESU Students from Dr. Santiago Solis, Vice President for Campus Life and Inclusive Excellence

Hello Warriors,

I hope you are doing well as we begin our third week of classes. It has been a long and stressful summer as we continue to deal with COVID-19 and address the need for social justice in our fight against racism nationally and globally. It is crucial that we continue to prioritize conversations and trainings around diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially given the country's rapidly changing racial/ethnic demographics. I hope you will join me and my amazing staff as we work together to create the welcoming, inclusive and respectful campus community we all want and deserve.

As you study remotely this fall semester, take time to reflect and think about your core values. What do you believe in? What grounds you? What motivates you? Your personal core values are incredibly important because they guide your vision, your purpose, the way you lead, and how you make decisions. As you explore and define your personal core values, consider that they will shape your assumptions about the world, provide the context within which you identify issues and goals, and set standards for your behavior and actions. It's also a good time to review the principles of ESU's Way of the Warrior and remind yourself of the values we hold dear as a campus community.

As I look back on a time when I was attending community college at 19 years old, I discovered writer and playwright James Baldwin. That beautiful soul changed my life forever with his powerful stories including *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, *Giovanni's Room*, *Another Country*, *Notes of a Native Son*, and *The Fire Next Time*. One life-changing lesson for me was the importance – and danger – of speaking truth to power. You must know who you are to stand in your truth. Mr. Baldwin would probably say that the Black Lives Matter movement is the latest slave uprising because we continue to be governed by slave codes. Spend time this fall discovering or re-familiarizing yourself with the works of Mr. Baldwin – I recommend *The Fire Next Time*.

Unfortunately, we have become a society of critics, quick to judge, dismiss, and cancel each other out. But to create is much braver and more difficult than to destroy. Efforts to root out and change the hearts and minds of committed racists will push the needle only so far. Instead, let's work together on creating loving and affirming spaces that make such racism meaningless and irrelevant. Let's focus on that!

I encourage you to reach out to the various departments in the division of Campus Life and Inclusive Excellence to ask questions about their services, to build relationships with staff, and to find ways to get involved. If you have questions, also feel free to contact me at 570-422-3463.

Dr. Santiago Solis

Pronouns: He/Him/His

**Black Lives Matter!**

Vice President, Campus Life & Inclusive Excellence

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