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To: The John Jay College Community
Re: Tuesday's Verdict and The Road Ahead

The legacy of George Floyd will be a turning point in our country's collective consciousness. After witnessing the almost 10-minute video of George imploring officers that he couldn't breathe, and begging for the comfort of his mother as he lay dying under a police officer's knee, a cry for justice was heard across our country and the world. Young people and activists demanded change. Police officers and public leaders condemned the merciless assault on human life by one sworn to protect it. Tuesday's verdict provides us with accountability and a much-needed step toward justice, but one conviction alone cannot undo centuries of trauma and the impact of systemic racism. We must continue the hard work required to create a system of justice that's equal for us all.

George Floyd's life mattered. It mattered to his six-year-old daughter waiting for him to come home to Houston. It mattered to his siblings who knew that they could count on his love and support. It mattered to his family, friends, and neighbors who viewed him as a "gentle giant" in their lives. This loving community, built up throughout George's life, has been robbed of a future with him.

Everyone's life is precious, and that life should be protected and respected. The man convicted of murdering George Floyd failed to uphold the sanctity of life. His actions were in stark contrast to the courageous people who bore witness to the crime. In the agonizing moments when George struggled to breathe, community members across racial, gender, and generational lines raised their voices for his humanity. What we watched in the video taken by Darnella Frazier was a murder. This brutal act was the antithesis of honorable law enforcement practices. It was an insult to the decent, hardworking police officers who protect and serve our communities, and it was an affront to justice. That's why law enforcement officers across the country unequivocally denounced the former officer's actions, affirming that they were out of step with police training, ethics, and values.

In the past year, over a thousand civilians were killed at the hands of law enforcement—a number that far outpaces any other wealthy democracy, and a number that disproportionately represents people of color. These tragic events have understandably left many in our communities anguished and outraged. In the wake of the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Daunte Wright, and Adam Toledo, we must continue to work with law enforcement agencies, community leaders, and public officials to reimagine our national view of public safety. Together we can build a safer society where fewer lives are lost and underserved communities get the investments they need to thrive. We know from our [Future of Public Safety convenings](#) and [report](#), an initiative done in partnership with the [National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives](#), that we have a common vision for what public safety could and should look like. Obviously, far more progress remains to be made, but if we collectively commit to creating a more equitable world, change is possible. I have every confidence that the police officers and community leaders educated at John Jay will continue to be examples of what a successful community engaged public safety partnership can look like.

Understanding that the events we see play out too often on video can be traumatic to process, I urge anyone in need of support to avail themselves of our free and confidential wellness resources. Students can set up a

meeting with our [Counseling Services Center](#) or reach out directly to Cory Head, Associate Director of Counseling at 212-887-6239, chead@jjay.cuny.edu. Faculty and staff can access services through our [CUNY Work/Life Program](#) and also participate in our “Healing Circles” program developed by the Human Resources Department. As students experienced in their “Post Verdict Student Speak Out,” this safe space offers faculty and staff the opportunity to reflect on their feelings and identify meaningful actions. Information about “Healing Circles” will be shared shortly. Asking for help is never a sign of weakness, it’s a sign of strength. Please continue to support each other throughout these challenging times.

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