UNT Dallas Responds – Police and Community

Let me begin with a few data points:

* The killing of George Floyd touched off the largest and most sustained protests and demonstrations the nation has seen since the 1960’s.
* Derek Cauvin, the officer charged with Mr. Floyd’s death, accumulated 17 misconduct complaints in his 19 years on the Minneapolis PD. Yet he taught in its police academy.
* There are about 18,000 law enforcement agencies in our country, and to the best of my knowledge, there has been no major police reform legislation passed by Congress since the 1990s.
* Police Chiefs have recently been fired in Louisville and Atlanta. Baltimore has seen 5 police commissioners since 2015. That’s just the tip of the ice berg.
* New York City has a budget of about $6 b for public safety. A movement is underway to divert about a $1 b into social services, one of many calls for police defunding around the country.
* In Texas, both first responder suicides and line of duty deaths lead all other states, even the much larger California.
* We can all acknowledge that policing is among the most demanding and stressful of jobs. Officers operate in the most violent rich nation on earth where citizens also happened to be the most heavily armed. Without superb police training this can be a deadly mix.
* Just around the corner from UNT Dallas exists an innovative de-escalation program called Right Care in which a trained social worker, a fire fighter and a police patrol officer respond to 911 behavioral calls. Our friends and partners from MMHPI were instrumental in creating this national pilot, and it’s working.

James Baldwin wrote that “racism compromises, where it does not corrupt, all the Americans effort to build a better world – here, there or anywhere.”

Racism has been called America’s original sin. We are defiant in our university community that this does not and cannot be our fate.

Thank you for participating today. We are here, I believe, because there is a deep hunger to elevate the conversation on our campus and in our community around race, class, police behavior and human dignity. This is who we are as a university.