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June 26, 2020

RE: Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program

To My Fellow Chancellors and Presidents:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact. We know the rate of infection is higher in our communities as is the rate of hospitalization and unfortunately death. During unforeseen health crises and natural disasters, our communities suffer the most and receive the least amount of help. As pillars of our communities, we stand tall in helping those who are in need, but to be effective in providing that assistance, we must be adequately prepared for that task.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program is a critical tool that not only teaches our staff, but more importantly, our students in how they can be prepared to assist in times of need. This course of instruction can be provided at no cost and can lead our students into a field and career with a significantly higher average salary. The more our graduates' salaries rise, the more our endowments will rise, leading to greater opportunities for generations of students to come. In addition, with the incidents of natural and other disasters on the rise, the need for people who are formally trained in this field will continue to increase.

At Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), we have embraced this opportunity, and formed a CERT team. With this team, we have been offering certification courses to our students, staff and faculty for emergency and disaster preparedness and response. Not only has it enabled our students to be better prepared to become an asset to our communities when disasters arise, it has ignited their interest in this field of study. In addition, it has raised the stature of our University with our federal partners, playing a key role in ECSU being selected as a Federal Work Study Experiment site. That program will add more vital resources to ECSU, thereby improving our ability to provide the best possible education to our students. If you are interested and/or have questions, please contact Dr. Kevin Kupietz at [kdkupietz@ecsu.edu](mailto:kdkupietz@ecsu.edu) or by phone at (252) 335-3971.

I fully support the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program, and wholeheartedly encourage all of you to take advantage of this opportunity. When disasters strike, millions are spent in places of lesser need, and we are not always able to help our communities to the fullest extent possible. This program is a critical first step in preparing us to support and serve more effectively. Please give this serious consideration as a part of your efforts to build the capacity of your students to stand with you in helping both your institution and our communities.

Sincerely,

Karrie G. Dixon  
Chancellor

cc: Dr. Farrah Jackson-Ward, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affair  
Dr. Kevin Kupietz, Emergency Management Coordinator/Assistant Professor, Aviation & Emergency Management  
Rickey Freeman, Environmental Health and Safety Professional, University Police

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