

Message from the Dean of Physical Sciences

June 4, 2020

Calling Out Institutional Racism with a Call for Change

Dear Faculty, Students, Staff, Alumni, Partners, and Friends:

We reach out with heavy hearts about the inhumane deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Sean Reed, and Tony McDade—the most recent victims in a long history of destructive police brutality and institutional racism in our nation.

The civil unrest associated with these events is also part of our national history. The peaceful protests demonstrate what is healthy about our democracy. They also symbolize acknowledgement of and solidarity with the victims and their grieving families. The protests also sound a wake-up call for change.

And change is what is desperately needed: the disruption of the repetitive cycle of institutional cruelty and injustice which Black Americans have endured for far too long.

Chancellor Khosla and his leadership team recently shared in their [May 29 message](#) that it is necessary for us to reflect on hateful events with full transparency and to realize that they result from systemic, societal problems that call for action. This includes denouncing institutional racism in all its forms. Recognizing human rights violations and their devastating impacts—especially on our friends of color. Not tolerating or normalizing such violations. Condemning any use of inappropriate force by authorities, especially in communities of color. Rejecting acts of hate, bias, or violence based upon race, ethnicity, country of origin, religion, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Recognizing that there are systems and structures in place that facilitate inequities, and that we have a role in equalizing them. And, remaining strongly committed to practicing our values in a way that ensures everyone is a welcome member of our community.

We invite each of you to join us in recommitting to our efforts in this regard. Let us remember all the grieving families who are suffering and have suffered unbearable losses at the hands of institutional racism. Further, let us follow the example of our Black American friends and colleagues who practice exemplary courage daily as a matter of course. We must acknowledge that the same rules and systems do not apply equitably to everyone in this country, and we must work diligently to create an equitable society, starting with our own division.

Faculty, please put yourselves in our students' shoes. Consider with empathy the emotions and feelings they may be experiencing amidst the storm of these upsetting circumstances—especially as they prepare for finals. Listen to their voices and concerns. Be open to offering them your perspectives on these events and to providing the support they may need to get through this time. Consider with empathy your own emotions, too, and please reach out to Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) [Alison Coil](#) to discuss the issues you are facing and to let us know how the division can support you now.

Valued students, please know that the Division of Physical Sciences prioritizes your needs. Please feel free to reach out to our Associate Dean for Education and Students, [Thomas Hermann](#), to let us know how we can support you at this time. You may also reach out to our dedicated staff at

the [Student Success Center](#), as well as to us, your professors, your TAs, and to each other for support. Campus offers numerous [support services](#) as well.

Staff, a deep thank you for your steadfast support. Please reach out to your supervisors and/or to Assistant Dean [Rob Rome](#) for assistance or with concerns.

Finally, to our alumni, partners, and friends, please feel free to share any questions, comments, offers of support, or suggestions. We deeply welcome your insights and involvement.

In the coming weeks, the Vice Chancellor for EDI will be planning community conversations to provide spaces for healing and identifying ways to be agents of change in this moment. Details will be coming soon and will be communicated via campus notice and through our division's [EDI office](#).

Steven E. Boggs

Dean of Physical Sciences

Alison Coil

Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion