

Psychology Faculty Action Steps in Response to Black Students Organizations Statement

Dear Reader,

In the final weeks of the spring quarter, the nation was rocked by multiple murders of Black men and women, including George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, leading to a national reckoning with the continued legacy of anti-Black racism, racial trauma, and white supremacy in this country.

Meanwhile, higher education has continued to reckon with the ways its institutions and most privileged members manifest and perpetuate broader inequalities. For instance, the recent hashtag [#BlackInTheIvory](#), founded by Drs. Shardé Davis and Joy Melody Woods, put a spotlight on anti-Black racism experienced by Black students and faculty in the academy; attention has been drawn to [racial biases in the peer-review and publishing process in psychology](#); and the coronavirus pandemic's disproportionate impact on Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and low-income communities has foregrounded racial and economic inequities in higher ed.

Here on campus, President Randhawa issued a [statement](#) acknowledging that the university's efforts at addressing racial inequities have not been "fast or ambitious enough." And on June 22, Black Students Organizations on campus issued a [statement and list of demands](#) that called for "lasting change" by the university to address its "complicity in everyday racism" (p. 1). As the students outline in their letter, this is far from the first time that Black students on campus have stated their needs and then found their needs unmet. Moreover, students named the Department of Psychology specifically, as regards to the need to address our hiring practices and lack of representation of Black faculty (item #15).

To the students, we want you to know that we hear you, we see you, and we thank you.

We recognize that you are tired, that you are calling not for more words (such as this letter) but meaningful action steps and accountability. History shows that the gears of change move slowly in academia, but know that we are committed to timely action -- with timelines. As such, the undersigned commit to advancing the following agenda.

Some of these action items are ones we have been discussing and/or working on as a department, while others reflect recent conversations and input. Many of the items will require a full discussion and vote by the Department of Psychology before they can be implemented. We are committed to having those discussions and bringing those issues to vote. We are also required to work within the policies of the university and the faculty and staff unions. Where those policies present obstacles to this work, we commit to advocating for policy change. Many of the items will require funding, a difficult ask of the university during the current economic climate. However, we are committed to advocating tirelessly for the university funding needed to do this essential work.

Preliminary Steps (Summer 2020):

A group of Psychology faculty have worked off-contract on tasks to organize and support the statements and demands in the Black Students Organization letter.

We have drafted this letter and we are asking Psychology faculty and staff to sign to signify the commitment to prioritize, with momentum, the need to address anti-Blackness and systemic racism within the University and the Psychology Department.

Psychology faculty are working to secure funding for training faculty and staff to address racism and anti-Black racism (e.g., [Academics for Black Survival and Wellness](#)). Additionally, faculty are working to secure funding to address inequities in the additional labor by faculty of color (e.g., providing formal and informal mentoring to students of color) by such options for compensation as stipends/payment for such uncounted service, or course releases.

To be launched in academic year 2020-2021 (and to be ongoing)

1. Hire outside consultation to promote equity in hiring practices of psychology faculty and recruitment of Black faculty, ideally in collaboration with other departments who have the same hiring needs.
2. Provide anti-racism training for faculty and staff (with ongoing accountability groups), and training around awareness of and addressing of anti-Black racism.
3. Integrate anti-racist educator self-assessment, action, and ongoing accountability in the Department Evaluation Plan.
4. Assess the recruitment and the barriers to entry to the undergraduate majors, and the effect those have on Black students. Adjust major application procedures in a way that addresses inequities in students admitted to the major and underrepresentation of Black students in the major.
5. Diversify authors included in the curriculum, with increased representation of and engagement with work by scholars of color, including Black women and trans people of color.
6. Assess the barriers to admission to our graduate programs, and the effect those have on Black students. Address graduate program recruitment and application process to address any inequities that could be contributing to the underrepresentation of Black students and other students of color in the graduate programs.

The above list is of course not exhaustive or conclusive of all that we can continue to do as a department. But we are committing to the above items as particularly urgent items to address, in order to promptly scale up our department's efforts and address the concerns that have direct bearing on our Black students' lives.

Please note that the undersigned do not represent all faculty and staff in the Department of Psychology who are committed to this action. This message was created as a call to action by a group of faculty committed to leading the department through further steps, and signed by faculty and staff who wanted to indicate their support for this work. Because this message was circulated during a time where faculty are off-contract, all faculty have not had the time to review or offer input on these issues. However, the Department of Psychology will be focusing on these issues during their annual departmental retreat, before the start of fall quarter classes. To continually hold ourselves accountable, we will update this website with further information following that meeting, and throughout the academic year.

Thank you for reading.

Signed*,

Psychology Faculty and Staff
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Annie Fast
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Aaron Smith
Larry Symons
Annie Riggs
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Kendall Lawley
Christina Byrne
Jennifer McCabe
Jim Graham
Tina Du Rocher Schudlich
Katie Olvera
Julie Major
Judy Zeidel
Matt Seifert
David Sattler
Kristi Lemm
Cristina Sampaio
Todd Haskell
Jennifer Devenport
Kelly Jantzen
Barbara Lehman

** This is a live document, as some Psychology faculty are not on contract this summer, so names may be added over time.*