

Division of Biological Sciences message regarding Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

To All Students, Staff and Faculty,

We are living through a deeply troubling moment in history that challenges each of us to face the brutal reality that we have not yet built a truly inclusive and just society. It requires us to juxtapose our scientific curiosity, intellect, drive, and goal of making the world a healthier and better place for all, with a new and deadly pandemic and an old and tiresome tale of racism and police brutality against already marginalized members of our community.

While the recent and senseless killings of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd affect us all, we recognize that they negatively affect our Black students, staff and faculty in a significant and disproportionate way. We acknowledge the immense pain, sorrow, and mental anguish that our Black communities, especially our Black students, are experiencing right now. We acknowledge the systemic racial bias, macro and microaggressions, and social injustices experienced every day by valued members of our community.

To our Black students and others who are affected by these events, please know that we see you. We hear you. We are your allies, and we pledge to hold ourselves and this institution accountable to you and to the promise that all students deserve the right to live and learn freely in an environment that is free from bias and racial discrimination. We commit to creating spaces here in the Division of Biological Sciences where students, postdoctoral scholars, staff, and faculty can safely come together to learn, to innovate, and to discuss these issues that challenge your very existence on this campus. We promise as faculty to provide support for all students, especially those who identify as members of marginalized groups, by creating spaces to connect, to heal, and to plan the next steps of actions and advocacy for our Division and community. As the first step towards these goals, the Division of Biological Sciences will host multiple events and create a virtual space to start a dialogue for students, postdoctoral scholars, staff, and faculty. We will continue to harness the power of storytelling in our quarterly Connections gatherings, in which we come together as a community to hear personal stories of life and science to help bridge inclusivity gaps. Through these dialogues, we aim to identify opportunities for change that will improve the safety, well-being, and academic success of marginalized groups in the Division of Biological Sciences.

We recognize that we must now work together to find new ways to dismantle systemic racism. We ask each member of the Division of Biological Sciences to join us in this effort to confront racism and xenophobia, and to support the individual students, staff, and faculty who are impacted by these terrible events. We also ask each member of our community to help guide the decisive action needed to ensure that we serve all of our students, our community, and the nation. Please reach out to us [here](#) with your thoughts and ideas, and please participate in forthcoming events hosted by the campus and the Division so we can hear your individual voices.

None of us have all the answers, but together we can develop creative new approaches to break this destructive cycle.

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