



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES
UCLA FIELDING SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
CAMPUS BOX 951772
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-1772
PHONE: (310) 206-5296

June 12, 2020

RE: Response to Student Action Statement

Dear Students,

The Department of Environmental Health Sciences stands with you in solidarity, shared grief and outrage over the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Nina Pop, George Floyd and countless other Black people.

We recognize that there are numerous environmental health disparities embedded in American society that disproportionately affect the health and quality of life in communities of color – further exacerbating racial health disparities.

Our academy was built on a foundation of racism and discrimination. We need to recognize our moral responsibility to combat racism in every facet of our personal and professional lives. We write with a commitment to address anti-Blackness in our culture, institutions, and classrooms and to actively work towards becoming anti-racist.

Below we respond directly to the action items proposed in your letter of June 5, 2020:

Create departmental safe spaces for students to discuss the impacts of current events

In partnership with the FSPH Equity Diversity Inclusion Office, the EHS Department will offer reflective spaces for students to discuss the ongoing nationwide events. Although the current pandemic may not allow for us to meet on campus, we will establish virtual options to listen to your experiences and voices. The FSPH EDI Office will help the Department with the creation of the ground rules and the goals of the spaces. In partnership with the FSPH Human Resources Office, the Department will also connect with the UCLA Office of Ombuds Services and UCLA EDI Office for additional guidance and appropriate facilitation.

Accommodate final exam and final paper extensions (and minimize TA burden)

EHS faculty have been asked to educate themselves on the specific recent murders and acknowledge the current situations and stress that students are experiencing. EHS faculty are abiding by guidance from the Academic Senate, FSPH Dean, Faculty Executive Committee Chair, and EHS Interim Chair to offer flexibility by extending deadlines for final written assignments, expanding time frames for open book final examinations, canceling final classes or written assignments, and adopting a no-harm grading approach.

Systemic racism and its relation to Environmental Health

The department will continue strategic planning discussions with the FSPH EDI Office on a mandatory training on implicit bias. The first training will be scheduled in Summer 2020 as a required activity for faculty and staff. We will also incorporate an implicit bias component for all new student orientations. As requested, department staff and faculty will participate in the development of regular EDI meetings led by students, for students.

We will endeavor to promote environmental justice case studies linking exposures, exposure assessment, health outcomes and policies in our required courses. Curriculum changes will not be immediate but the first, critical step in developing a review process will include engagement with various departments. In Summer 2020, EHS faculty will seek resources from UCLA EDI Office, Center for Education Innovation & Learning in the Sciences, and Center for Accessible Education to learn what we can actively do to start addressing diverse viewpoints and hosting equity-centered courses during Fall 2020 and beyond.

Establish a departmental Equity Diversity Inclusion committee

EHS will appoint an EDI committee in Summer 2020. EHS will also engage with students to determine interest and participation, with the understanding that the department is responsible for the committee. Objectives are to reinforce the commitment that equity, diversity and inclusion are valued and needed for our core mission, and infused throughout every aspect of our work. The departmental committee Chair or a designated representative will be asked to join the schoolwide EDI committee to allow for accountability and consistency across departments, and also to help evaluate EHS-specific progress. The first meeting will be held in Summer 2020. These actions will require funding, and our faculty have initiated an EDI fund and have so far committed \$10,000 for EDI activities.

Hire and retain more Black faculty members

We will continue to advance a more just and equitable future for our department. This includes UCLA diversity requirements and mandatory implicit bias trainings for all committee members for faculty searches. We realize that guidelines and requirements are not enough to dismantle an unjust system. Our committee members will uphold peer accountability, and our department will continue to advertise in *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* and budget for more advertisements in other similar platforms. We hope to have continued student involvement in our recruitments so that the student perspective continues to be a strong voice in the process.

In summary, systemic racism and police brutality are societal issues that are inextricably linked and intertwined with our science. The global COVID-19 pandemic and recent protests demonstrate with clarity the racial disparities and injustices that impact people of color, and especially Black people. This persistent inequality across the nation demands urgency for action and change within our society and our EHS community.

We acknowledge that we do not have all the solutions, and we were wrong for not responding sooner and publicly. We also have not done enough in the past to uphold and enforce anti-racism and anti-Blackness. Our department will continue the dialog and the appropriate actions that will define our progress. We will engage with current students and alumni for continued discussions, with the understanding of our responsibilities on account and follow-through of the Department Chair and all Department constituents. We have a lot of work to do before we can promise consistent outcomes or long-term solutions. In the short-term, we have started the conversations and we are organizing our

commitments as described for the summer which will help to frame further actions for academic year 2020/2021.

Thank you to the student leaders and alumni who wrote and signed the letter, and who shared their perspectives in our faculty meeting. We appreciate your action statement and regard it as a starting point for us to understand that we must be committed personally and professionally to effect change.

In solidarity,

Faculty of Environmental Health Sciences



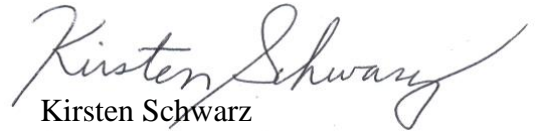
Shane Que Hee



Miriam Marlier



Brian Cole



Kirsten Schwarz



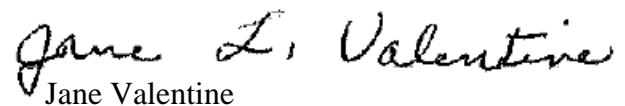
Michael Collins



Irwin (Mel) Suffet



Michael Jerrett



Jane Valentine



Jian Li



Yifang Zhu

*Niklas Krause on sabbatical