

**From:** [Pamela Krochalk](#)  
**To:** [DH Email](#)  
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Dear University Community,

We in the Department of Health Sciences have been overwhelmed by the powerful and eloquent statements of support by our sister departments throughout the campus to the Black Lives Matter movement. These statements have been inspirational and have caused us to look deeply into ourselves in the department. We have spent countless hours amongst ourselves studying these statements and asking ourselves where we as individual faculty members and as a department have been found both responsive yet wanting with respect to our Black faculty, staff, and student colleagues. In short, we would like to affirm our support to the Movement and are committing ourselves to specific actions in the coming weeks and months to those in communities of color – but particularly our Black brothers and sisters who have experienced and continue to experience outrageous, heartbreaking, and unjustifiable social / economic / political / legal injustice since the beginning of our nation.

We in the Department of Health Sciences strongly stand against racism, stigma, and discrimination in all of their forms such as bigotry, micro-aggressions, biases, prejudice, and xenophobia. We stand for justice, equity, and solidarity with Black communities. The racism and police brutality resulting in the killings of so many Black individuals is long-standing, and it is important that we all continue our efforts to listen, learn, and stay engaged in anti-racism to help stop systemic racism. It is not enough to silently support; we need to continue the fight to help dismantle white privilege that results in discrimination and stigma for our students, staff, and faculty.

We in the Department of Health Sciences strive to center the voices and experiences of Black individuals because their voices are too often dismissed or even disparaged by a society that was founded on the ultimate racist act – slavery. In Health Sciences, we address issues of racism and discrimination in our work and strive to reduce health disparities based on race and ethnicity in society. We will continue to use our research and pedagogy to better understand and reduce health inequities that too often result in premature deaths in Black communities. Recognition of this heavy burden on Black communities is too often left silent in such conversations without a voice of advocacy that can promote change. Being silent perpetuates racism, with serious consequences to the lives of Black folks, and we have witnessed that silence equals deaths. Racism is a public health crisis, a driving force of the social determinants of health and surrounded by stigma, discrimination, and unequal access to healthcare. We want to better understand the importance of equity and recognize our own biases and misuse of power.

As a department we have outlined specific actions below and that will be refined into measurable statements to allow us in the Department of Health Sciences to assess our progress and ourselves.

That the following departmental/program documents/processes/activities in Health Sciences be reviewed from a racial / cultural / learning perspective:

- Strategic plan with particular attention being paid to an analysis of the external and internal environments, mission statements, and the strategic initiatives.
- Tenure and promotion reviews.
- Faculty peer observation guidelines and instruments.
- Internship handbooks and orientations for students and supervisors.
- New student and faculty (both full-time and part-time) and staff recruitment, admission/hiring, orientation, formal mentoring, and retention.

That all degree programs within our department be reviewed from a racial / cultural / learning

perspective; specifically...

- Program and student learning outcomes (PLOs and SLOs).

That population-based / prevention-oriented perspective, interventions, case studies, and research include communities that have been / are marginalized.

That the history of our professions which has included racial atrocities committed under the banner of public health be recognized and acknowledged, as well as the minimal research that has focused on the wellbeing of individuals from marginalized communities.

That different ways of knowing be recognized, acknowledged, and embraced.

That we continue to de-emphasize personal / one-to-one healthcare interventions and emphasize the greater role that social determinants of health (e.g., housing, education, employment opportunities) play in the well-being of our various communities and that we prepare students who can design / plan health programs that incorporate social determinants of health thereby alleviating our current health disparities.

That we prepare students with cultural and professional humility that can incorporate models of health and healthcare delivery from a variety of cultures and worldviews into the dominant Western biomedical framework.

That all course syllabi corresponding to our degree programs in Health Sciences be reviewed from a racial / cultural / learning perspective. More specifically, this means...

- Including learning resources that represent authors with diverse backgrounds with respect to race, culture, gender, and sexuality.

- Promoting the role of community health and healthcare management professionals as internal and external advocates for the wellbeing of members from marginalized communities.

- Inviting students to share their preferred name and pronoun with instructors.

That the following be established within the Department of Health Sciences with an eye toward racial / cultural representation:

- Advisory board with a diverse composition.

- Processes to include the representation and participation of students and community members of color in departmental meetings and committees involving community issues.

That our health sciences faculty in their...

- Maintaining of their clinical and professional credentials focus some of their required continuing education units (CEUs) on racial and ethnic issues.

- Research include community-based studies in which community members – particularly in communities of color – participate as co-investigators / co-discovers / co-creators in collective inquiry.

In closing, we recognize that the recurrent social injustices have taken a toll on many of us and we want to remind our students, staff, and faculty of the availability of Student Health and Psychological Services and the Employee Assistance Program. As a department, we pledge to continue to take measurable and assessed actions in our work to help eradicate racism and support the lives and successes of our Black students, staff, and faculty as well as all minority and marginalized groups.

Warm regards,

Faculty and Staff

Department of Health Sciences