

June 5, 2020

## **An Open Letter to UC Santa Cruz from the Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity**

The Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity sends our condolences to the family of George Floyd and to the many other victims of the systemic brutality and racism that continue to plague our country. And we send our deepest sympathy to our students, faculty and staff colleagues who have themselves suffered from or have seen the effects of institutionalized racism on their families, friends, and communities. We humbly acknowledge your pain and offer this statement in support of change.

Racism is rife within the nation, and UC Santa Cruz is not immune. As the committee charged with oversight on issues of affirmative action, diversity, equity, and inclusion, we feel an urgent need to address the institutional racism that troubles our own campus.

Chancellor Larive's recent (May 29, 2020) letter to the campus acknowledges that "white supremacist systems, structures, and conditions" shape the functioning of the university. If, as Chancellor Larive states, the University is willing to examine its own institutional biases and speed change, then the chancellor must take meaningful action now, action that honors the memory of George Floyd.

This must begin with an acknowledgment that campus claims of fairness and accountability have not yet been met--that we must do better. We charge the administration to develop a clear path to ameliorating these inequalities within our own university, going beyond statements alone.

Importantly, we cannot ameliorate inequalities while holding fast to the need to discipline, especially when identifying transgression is so tightly linked to identifying implicitly transgressive bodies. It is not enough for the chancellor, or for committees like our own, to react only to each new instance of blatant racist violence. Doing so normalizes the grinding, quotidian acts of racism and microaggressions that reflect systematic racism and cannot be explained away as the work of a few bad actors. Instead, we call on campus leaders to show their leadership. We call on the chancellor to establish a plan of action, including pledging to:

- Speak out forcefully and consistently against institutional bias and racism, not just about outlier acts of violence or hate speech;
- Convene a compensated working group with a significant representation of university affiliates of color, including faculty or graduate students with research expertise in the field, to identify key engines for rapid institutional improvement, and key measures that will indicate success;
- Institute a more robust anti-bias curriculum for senior administration as well as faculty, staff, students, and UC police;
- Order the reevaluation of protest violation policies on campus: enacting the existing policies tends to disproportionately identify students of color protesting systems that disproportionately disadvantage people of color;
- Order the reevaluation of policies governing the use of external police forces on the UCSC campus, with the explicit intent of (a) eliminating or reducing use of such external forces, (b) strictly limiting their use and display of militarized tactics, weapons, and uniforms, (c) ensuring that such forces have, at minimum, the same level of anti-bias training as do our campus police, (d) creating a standard post-demonstration police tactics review as part of every demonstration, to normalize assessment and evaluation and make it transparent and accessible.

- Establish recruitment, hiring, and retention procedures meant to expand and support diversity among upper administration, and extend and make permanent efforts to diversify hiring of faculty and staff;
- Cease pursuing the COLA-strike related student hearings, and reverse the disciplinary measures already exacted: the subject is tainted by accusations of bias; full clarity is unlikely; and true healing on this campus cannot take place without generosity and willingness to set aside grievance.

Acknowledging systemic racism means acting in good faith on that knowledge. Yuli Ortega, Director of the STEM Diversity Institute, shared with CAAD a letter she had written. In it, she writes of the need for strong leadership, and for those of us in leadership positions to step up:

“I think it is time to not turn a blind eye to what the problem is. [If we do, we] are perceived as no good, up to no good, and will bring no good. This rhetoric will only change the day that we are given the chance to lead, be in positions of leadership and that is a decision [we] make.”

In solidarity,

Elizabeth Abrams (chair)  
Nicolas Davidenko  
Marcella Gomez  
Dee Hibbert-Jones  
William Sullivan