

June 8, 2020

Dear President Currall:

As Black employees at the University of South Florida, we are devastated by the systemic murders of Black people by police officers across the United States. We write to affirm our support for those who are protesting including USF students, staff, alumni, and faculty, who are risking their lives in order to assure a more just future for America. Even as Black communities across the U.S. disproportionately suffer the ravages of the COVID-19 virus, we mourn the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and many others who have been victims of police violence and whose perpetrators have still not been held accountable. We are painfully stricken by these deaths because we recognize that their deaths are part of the deep-seated, systemic racism and anti-blackness that has plagued America for centuries.

We agree with you, President Currall, that it is important to pause and think. And, at the same time, we know we must go much further by developing concrete anti-racist practices at USF. In addition to treating others with respect at the individual level, research (including some of the research produced by the undersigned USF faculty) reveal that targeted anti-racist policies, procedures, and an adequate grievance process must be established (or improved) to effectively address systemic racism.

As Black faculty and staff, we encourage the continued support for resources at USF, especially for our students so they might be both protected against racism and educated about the overlapping, intersecting systems of inequality that shape their lives. For some of the undersigned Black faculty, the impetus for their research emerges from a context that is structured by their own experiences of racism and anti-blackness. Our presence as critically-engaged and community-oriented researchers reflects our commitment to analyzing the structural causes of inequality in order to work towards a more equitable, and caring society.

In light of this, we include the following recommendations:

- Mandatory high-quality training for multicultural competence and sensitivity training for all administrators holding leadership positions, and support for existing cultural competency programs that service the entire student body.
- Increase racial and ethnic diversity at the administrative and instructional levels by promoting Black faculty and staff to leadership positions, and at the campus level by continuing to support the recruitment and retention of Black students.
- Create protocols for racial accountability at each level of the tenure and promotion process to ensure an equitable process for Black and other minoritized faculty. An annual list of tenure-eligible Black faculty can be distributed to diversity-related offices to support campus initiatives to recruit, hire, retain, and promote Black faculty.
- Expand funding and programmatic support for Africana Studies and Latin American Studies,

two critical areas of knowledge that provide students with interdisciplinary perspectives on overlapping systems of oppression as well as historic and contemporary social movements developed in the name of peace, justice and equality. These disciplines provide all students with cultural competency, speak to a humanistic vision of the world, and prepare students to be better citizens in both local and global contexts.

- Expand resources for community partnerships that bring together teams of USF faculty, students, and staff with, and in those communities to carve out long term institutional commitments that build partnerships, co-create knowledge, and deliver mutual, and substantial benefits to all involved. As a Carnegie Classified Community Engaged university, many USF faculty of all races for over a decade have worked with Black communities in Tampa Bay. We encourage USF to take stock of that work, and dedicate more effort to using that work to improve access to jobs, high quality education, health, housing, built infrastructure, etc. in these communities. USF's impact should be measured based on our contributions to meeting set targets. Grounding this work in the Institute on Black Life, and the USF Heritage Lab, both led by Black faculty, would require support, and would provide permanent spaces for these critical partnerships.
- Evaluate salary disparities across race and provide workers with access to professionalization and advancement opportunities. Black staff workers earn less than their non-Black counterparts and Black staff are among the lowest paid employees on campus.
- Secure additional resources, including devoted campus facility space, for Black and other minoritized students on campus. Resources for diversity and multicultural affairs offices also support staff who implement the university's stated commitment to diversity.
- Conduct an annual climate survey that will be distributed campus-wide with a standing executive community to review and/or implement actionable items to improve campus climate.
- Review university police policies and procedures regarding hiring, training, and overall engagement with students, faculty, and staff on campus.

To conclude, we understand that any effort to eradicate racism and anti-blackness must include a commitment from all of us. As members of the USF community, we know that USF has much to celebrate including its national recognition related to the recruitment and retention rate of Black students. Beyond the numbers, however, we want to ensure that the quality of the student experience and the breadth of their knowledge equips them to see themselves as responsible, civic-minded, and anti-racist leaders in an increasingly global and diverse world. We invite students, staff, and faculty to work in solidarity with each other and with the campus community to re-imagine what Black life could and should be at USF and in the Tampa Bay community. The confluence of the COVID-19 pandemic, this ongoing racial crisis, and the USF campus consolidation process is a moment when we can collectively mourn, listen and hear each other, and, at the same time, actively work to implement a new and bolder vision of Black life at USF, in the United States, and across the world more broadly.

Sincerely,

The undersigned 88 USF Black employees (including both faculty and staff)

Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman, Sociology
Cheryl Rodriguez, Africana Studies, SIGS
Aisha Durham, Communication
Maya Trozt, Civil & Environmental Engineering
Deirdre Cobb-Roberts, Educational and Psychological Studies
Fenda A. Akiwumi, Director, Institute on Black Life/Professor, School of Geosciences
Antoinette Jackson
Kristofer Newsome, President - USF Black Faculty and Staff Association
A'Naja M. Newsome, Recreation and Wellness & PhD Student in College of Education
Adetola Louis-Jacques OBGYN
Aleatha Neal, ABA-CFS
Alexis Mootoo, Ph.D. - Office of Student Success, School of Interdisciplinary and Global Studies, Humanities, Muma College of Business
Alicia Best, College of Public Health
Allyson L. Nixon
Althea Blake, Ed.D., TRiO Student Support Services
Alyssa Brown, MD, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Anissa McKenzie, Office of Clinical Research
Anthea Henderson, Undergraduate Studies
Ashley Metelus, Department of Medical Education
Bianca Johnson, Sociology
Candace Henry, Office of Financial Aid
Cassandra Thomas, College of Behavioral & Community Sciences
Cecil Howard, AVP, Diversity, Inclusion, & Equal Opportunity (DIEO)
Chandra Davis/UGS
Chris Simmons, School of Social Work
Christopher Alexander
Darren L. Gambrell, Black Faculty and Staff Association, Office of Student Services
Dawn Brown, School of Social Work
Demeda Allen, RM, College of Engineering
Denelta Adderley Henry, USFSP HR
Denise Davis-Cotton, Director, USF Center for PAInT
Denise R Barnes, CBCS/CFS/CARD
Devona F. Pierre, DIEO
Dominique King, Academic Space and Course Management
Earl Conteh-Morgan, Professor, SIGS.
Edward Kissi, Africana Studies, SIGS
Elyse Lewis, USF IT UX Researcher, Black Faculty & Staff Association Marketing Lead, Secretary, and Mentor
Eryka Marshall, LMHC Mental Health Law & Policy

Fai Howard, Undergraduate Studies
Frank Pyrtle III, Mechanical Engineering
Gary Oliver, Office of Graduate Studies
Geveryl Robinson, Verbal and Visual Arts
Guitele J Rahill, Ph.D., LCSW USF School of Social Work
Henrick Jeanty, Computer Science and Engineering
Jacqueline Wiltshire, COPH
Jason Axford, LMHC - USF Counseling Center
Jessica Turpin, MPH, USF School of Social Work
John N. Gathegi, School of Information
Jonathan Gaines, Mechanical Engineering Department
Joseph W. Dorsey, Ph.D., Patel College of Global Sustainability
Karen Edwards, RM, College of Engineering
Kateka "Kae" Riggins, Student Life & Engagement
Katina Lowery
Khary Rigg
Kimberly Brown, Black Faculty & Staff Association
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Will Tyson, Sociology
Yvette Blanchard, Resource Management