

To:

Dr. Steven Currall, President

Dr. Ralph Wilcox, Provost

Dr. Eric Eisenberg, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

Dr. Haywood L. Brown, MD - Vice President of Institutional Equity, DCEO

Dr. Timothy Boaz, President, USF Senate

Dr. Kersuze Simeon-Jones, Chair, CAS Faculty Council

CAS Diversity Liaisons

CAS Department Chairs and Center Directors

We hope this letter finds you well.

The tragic events of the past few weeks have made painfully clear the problems that Black and Brown communities across the nation face because of a long history of systemic racism and police violent practices. As an institution of higher education and a leader in the Tampa Bay community, USF must condemn this violence and consider our own history and responsibility to avoid the reproduction of these injustices among our minoritized students, staff and faculty.

The CAS Diversity Committee (DC) is tasked with advising “the Dean and the Faculty Council concerning diversity in the composition of the programs and personnel of all units within CAS.”

The DC appreciates President Currall’s letter to the campus community on June 8 stating the plans of his administration to “be a force for positive change.” We believe urgent and immediate action must be taken for USF to truly be a leader of this “positive change.” We also support the sentiments and recommendations made by the USF Black Faculty and Staff in their letter to President Currall on June 8, 2020, and the letter sent by several Literacy Studies faculty to USF faculty on June 12, 2020. We advise that each recommendation from these letters be addressed. In addition, we are heartened by the CAS departments and committees that took the initiative to draft statements on current events, acting much earlier than the college administration.

We support the spirit of the action plan presented by the Dean of CAS in his letter on June 10, 2020 and believe this plan must be made more concrete and focused. Per the committee’s charge, we advise USF and the College of Arts & Sciences to complete the following action items:

- Action Item 1: We are concerned about the virtual erasure of departments and institutes that focus on racism issues, such as Africana Studies and the Institute for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (ISLAC). This has been going on for more than a decade. We call on the USF administration at all levels to consult all important stakeholders and appropriately and adequately support and invest in these areas of study and in their faculty and students. These departments and institutes serve a central role in educating our students on systems of racism and other forms of oppression.
- Action Item 2: We urge CAS to provide resources (*i.e.* administrative support and funds) to the Departmental Diversity Liaisons and the DC so they might implement department-specific strategies to achieve diversity and inclusion within their units.
- Action Item 3: We feel it is insufficient to merely advertise CAS “courses that address issues of race and racism.” Instead, we encourage CAS to initiate efforts to require that all students take and pass a class on anti-racism and discrimination issues prior to graduation.

- Action Item 4: We recommend that CAS initiate “high-quality training for multicultural competence and sensitivity training” for administration, faculty and staff, in line with President Currall’s statement of June 8, 2020.
- Action Item 5: We ask CAS to develop, together with USF Libraries, anti-racism modules and create guided learning activities that promote anti-racist teaching and literacy practices in courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, we recommend curating a list of recommended readings, scholarly writings, and literature on the issues of racism, discrimination and marginalization suffered by minoritized communities.
- Action Item 6: We ask CAS to perform an equity audit in each department and administrative unit with a specific focus on identifying how systemic racism is reflected in governance policies and hiring practices.
- Action Item 7: We ask CAS to work with Student Affairs in order to develop “sanctuary spaces” where minoritized students, faculty, staff and administrators can “hang out” and have access to a sense of community and discuss challenging topics as a form of safety on campus.
- Action Item 8: We request that CAS create a functioning mentorship system for minoritized communities of students, faculty and staff who arrive at USF, to provide opportunities for networking.
- Action Item 9: We ask that CAS revise all college statements concerning “diversity and inclusion,” including governance documents.

Further, we call on our administrative leaders to gather information that will help our campus community to identify past and present racial inequities in our college, so we may transparently chart an informed path forward to address historical inequities and to meet our goal of a diverse and inclusive campus. Consequently, we request the following information be shared with the entire USF campus community:

- Action Item 10: By the end of Summer 2020,
  1. A letter from President Currall explaining how he sees his role in dealing with systemic racism on campus, what kind of policies he has implemented, and what plans he has moving forward. We request data on how many African American, Latinx, and other minoritized faculty members are part of the leadership teams of the Office of the President, the Provost’s Office and CAS, and how inclusivity and diversity have been considered when putting together leadership teams.
  2. A similar letter from Provost Wilcox regarding the Provost’s Office, with data on leadership team racial/ethnic diversity annually from throughout Provost Wilcox’s tenure in that position.
  3. A similar letter from Dean Eisenberg, also with data on leadership team racial/ethnic diversity annually from throughout Dean Eisenberg’s tenure in that position. We further would request information about what actions were taken by Dean Eisenberg and his leadership team to address the reports created by the CAS Diversity Committee in the past.
  4. Police violence is one of the most horrific experiences that African American, Latinx, and other minoritized individuals confront. We request a report from USF’s police department that includes the following:
    - a. A statistical breakdown of the demographics of participants in incidents reported to or initiated by USF Police in the last 3 years, with particular attention to those who were detained, reasons for detention, and any further measures taken.
    - b. Information on how the USF police is trained and what kind of practices it has adopted to assure that there is no racial profiling.
    - c. Information on USF police policies and practices related to the detention of individuals.

- d. A statistical breakdown of the current racial, gender, and ethnic diversity of members of the police department, and the Chief Officer's previous efforts and current plans to expand diversity and diversity awareness among the department.
  - e. A report on any allegations of racism or brutality against the department and actions taken in the event of grievances.
5. As per Action Item 1, we seek information to understand the role the following entities have in the current curriculum, how they have been funded in the past, and how they will be funded in the future. Specifically, we request the following information:
    - a. A report on the annual budget of the Institute on Black Life during the tenures of Dr. Wilcox and Dr. Eisenberg, with information for changes in the allocation.
    - b. A similar report for ISLAC. We would like to know why this institute has consistently lost relevance at USF, especially as compared to its counterparts at major public Florida Universities (UF: <http://www.latam.ufl.edu>; FSU: <https://coss.fsu.edu/lacs/faculty-staff>; FIU: <https://lacc.fiu.edu>) We request a statement from Dean Eisenberg about his previous and future vision for the Institute, along with a report on: number of faculty within the Institute ; record of tenure and retention; hiring processes in leadership positions.
    - c. A similar report for Africana Studies that highlights budgetary changes, faculty retention, and college vision. Within this report we request information for why Africana Studies is no longer a stand-alone department.
    - d. A similar report on the Humanities Institute, and what is the vision of their leadership on all issues addressed in this letter.
  6. A report that explains how USF ensures that issues of racism and discrimination are dealt with in a transparent and forthcoming manner. We request information on how many complaints about racial discrimination and acts of racism were reported to supervisors and/or DCEO by students, staff and faculty in CAS over the last five years, and what became of these reports. Further, we would like to know what steps USF took to prevent such experiences in the future, or plans USF has to initiate such steps to address underlying concerns of systemic racism.
  7. A report that identifies whether any communities of color were impacted by the placement or expansion of any of the USF campuses or USF-related buildings (in terms of eminent domain, purchases, destruction, etc.), including the effects of gentrification on the surrounding communities that may have led to coerced mobility due to rent increases, etc. Further, we would like to see a commitment from USF to consider the issue of the effect on resident communities of color in any decisions made regarding future growth of the university.
  8. Faculty
    - a. A report on faculty hiring, retention, tenure and promotion decisions by race/ethnicity, particularly highlighting African American, Latinx, and other minoritized professors during Dean Eisenberg's tenure as Dean. This should include disclosure of any federal investigation for violation of federal policies regarding racial discrimination in faculty decisions.
    - b. Information on the discontinuation of the leadership program for minorities interested in administration which was terminated during the administration of Dr. Genshaft.
    - c. A report on how many African American, Latinx, and other minoritized faculty members were involved in drafting the recently approved university-wide Principles of Community. Were these principles written after reviewing USF's past issues on racial discrimination?

We ask that Administrators, Department Chairs and Diversity Liaisons please disseminate this letter to appropriate administrators, faculty and staff.

Respectfully submitted, CAS Diversity Committee