

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

STATEMENT CONDEMNING SYSTEMIC RACISM IN ALL INSTITUTIONS

A CALL TO ACTION

The University of South Florida College of Education embraces and promotes values of diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice. As a community we are horrified and devastated by the pandemic of racism in this nation.

The tragic police killing of unarmed 46-year-old George Floyd in Minneapolis on Memorial Day, 2020, was not a single event but reflected long historic and systemic control and murder of Black (or) Brown people of color at the hands of law enforcement and in vigilante acts: Rodney King, Trayvon Martin (2012); Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice (2014); Sandra Bland, Jamar Clark, Freddie Gray, Eric Harris, Walter Scott (2015); Philando Castile, Terence Crutcher, Keith Lamont Scott, Michelle Shirley, Delrawn Small, Sylville Smith, Alton Sterling (2016); Botham Jean (2018); Atatiana Jefferson, Marzues Scott (2019); Sean Reed, Tony McDade, Riah Milton, Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Rayshard Brooks (2020).

The common thread in all these killings is racism: systemic, individual, and anti-Black (or) Brown. As a College of Education, we must actively do more to stand in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and other movements that fight to end systemic racism in all institutions, including systems of public education. The school to prison pipeline is clear evidence of systemic racism in our educational institutions. The policing of Black (or) Brown students of color results in punitive disciplinary practices and policies that reinforce disparities beginning in preschool. Even very young children are placed in handcuffs for minor infractions and subjected to disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion. The school to prison pipeline is bolstered by implicit bias and curriculum that systemically erases the histories of Black (or) Brown people of color, which, in turn, contributes to children’s racial trauma through chronic exposure to symbolic and epistemological violence in schools.

We also acknowledge the historic and contemporary role of White supremacy in our nation’s education system, PreK-12 through higher education, as well as the critical role that White administrators, faculty, staff, and students can and should play in calling out and dismantling it. This work belongs to everybody, not just to people of color.

We call for our College community—administrators, faculty, staff and students—to stand together against systemic racism by:

- Challenging racist ideas within ourselves and within each other, recognizing patterns of racial gaslighting, and learning to see, hear, and acknowledge racism.

- Empowering administrators, faculty, staff and students to report racial harassment and macro/microaggressions.
- Building and implementing curriculum that is not just multicultural, but also amplifies anti-racist, decolonial, and ethno-racial perspectives in courses and programming.
- Building, revising and implementing college, department, and programmatic policies that address racism in and beyond daily practice.
- Supporting our partners in dismantling racist practices in schools to ensure antiracist learning environments for our preservice educator candidates and the children they serve.
- Revising courses and programs to include curriculum, pedagogy, and assessments that engage students in ethno-racial justice efforts to counter White supremacy ideology, policies, and practices.
- Challenging deficit thinking and language about Black (or) Brown people and other marginalized administrators, faculty, staff, and students.
- Challenging coded language and speaking directly about race and racism. For instance, removing *urban* from programs and courses where it serves as a proxy for Black (or) Brown people of color.
- Actively recruiting and retaining Black (or) Brown scholars and students, by investing in their success, and removing roadblocks that limit their opportunities while also supporting anti-racist scholarship.
- Developing strategies for working with our partners to strengthen education policy, assessments, and accreditation practices that result in racial equity in education.
- Promoting on-going professional development that addresses systemic racism and anti-Blackness for administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

In this College of Education, the work to end racial and other types of oppression is imperative. Absence from this work is an unexcused absence. We commit to holding ourselves both individually and collectively accountable to combatting and dismantling racism in all its forms. To that end, we call on each other to speak out against the injustices of structural and institutionalized racism and affirm our commitment to unite in leveraging our knowledge, research and skills to engage in the work of racial justice within the field of education and our broader society.