

Dear Members of the Penn State Law Community,

I am grateful for the moving and powerful statement by our Black Law Students Association leaders, and think it is critical that we listen and are supportive allies. We need to amplify their voices and work in partnership to take concrete steps to be antiracist and to address racist violence, police brutality, and racial profiling, and their profound – and often deadly – impacts on the Black community.

Progress is too slow. The recent deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Sean Reed, Nina Pop, Christian Taylor, and Tony McDade follow the losses of so many others. It is unacceptable that our Black friends, neighbors, colleagues, and community members have to be afraid for themselves and those they love. Although I never will be able to completely understand what our BLSA students and other Black community members are experiencing, I stand with them, hear them, and value them. My heart aches and I grieve with them.

Last Saturday, I indicated my commitment to collaborating with our community to make progress. I think it is critical that we turn that commitment into meaningful action. I want to make sure that we listen and amplify Black voices in the way that we do so. I have reached out to BLSA, SBA, and other student, faculty, staff, alumni, and board leaders on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues to develop our next steps.

I appreciate our BLSA and SBA leaders collaborating to develop this Thursday's conversation on race relations and movie night. I plan to attend to listen, learn, and reflect, and encourage all members of our community to participate. I also will be meeting with our BLSA and SBA leaders this week to listen, and look forward to listening to our students at the Information and Listening Session this Wednesday at noon, and to our alumni at our alumni event at 8 pm tonight.

As our BLSA and SBA students eloquently addressed in their letters to our community, a commitment to antiracism includes work on implicit and explicit bias in ourselves, our community, and the broader society. Lawyers have an obligation to promote justice and fight bias and hate that includes protecting Black lives and Black human rights. We need to be honest about our own biases and work on them. We need to call out racism when we see it, and then help to stop it. I appreciate the SBA sharing anti-bias training resources. I plan to explore, together with our Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, Assistant Dean for Students, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and student leaders – with input from faculty, staff, students, and alumni – how we can most effectively provide anti-bias training at Penn State Law.

I also think it is important that Penn State Law contribute to needed law and policy reform and advocacy, something the law schools and lawyers are uniquely situated to positively impact. For example, in 2016, after Jamar Clark was killed by police in Minneapolis, I taught a course in which law students worked with an NGO to propose legal and other measures to improve police accountability. I plan to listen to our community's ideas on what form that contribution might take here and collaborate to implement them in ways that build upon efforts taking place elsewhere.

Unfortunately, over the past several days, there have been reports of racist behavior on social media by individuals reported to be Penn State students, and also other racist comments and abhorrent social media posts by individuals reported to be Penn State students. I join the University in condemning all racist comments and hate-filled actions, which do not reflect our values. The staff are verifying individuals that may have been involved and reaching out to those in question.

Finally, I wanted to build upon the resources shared to list some university resources for students, faculty, and staff to obtain mental health assistance and report concerns.

- As our SBA leaders mentioned, the [Center for Counseling and Psychological Services](#), 814-863-0395, provides assistance for students. The [Multicultural Resource Center](#), 814-865-1773, also provides individual counseling and educational services
- The Employee Assistance Program, 866-799-2728, provides assistance for faculty and staff.
- Students and others who believe they have been a victim of discrimination or bias may contact the following offices to report the issue: [Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity](#): 814-865-5906; [Report Bias](#); [Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs](#): 814-865-0909; [Affirmative Action Office](#): 814-863-0471
- Anyone who wishes to file an anonymous report may call the 24-hour Penn State Hotline at 800-560-1637 or report online at <https://hotline.psu.edu/>.
- If at any time, you or others feel threatened or unsafe, call 911 or University Police at 814-863-1111.
- If you're not sure about where to get support, you can contact our Penn State Law Office for Student Services. Our new Assistant Dean for Student Services, Wende' Ferguson, started Monday and her email is [wpf5069@psu.edu](mailto:wpf5069@psu.edu). Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion Dara Purvis, [dep23@psu.edu](mailto:dep23@psu.edu) and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Jill Engle, [jne2@psu.edu](mailto:jne2@psu.edu), also can assist you. In addition, you can contact the University Office of the Vice Provost for [Educational Equity](#) at 814-865-5906 or Office of the Vice President for [Student Affairs](#) at 814-865-0909.

We have work to do. I look forward to doing it together.

Warmly,  
Hari

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