

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND INCLUSION
(Final; Action)

EQ.20.04 Resolution on University Response to Racism

WHEREAS, recent events have prompted national discussion and protest about racism—including its impacts and its systemic, institutional, structural, and implicit natures; and

WHEREAS, racism and incidents of racism are a national problem that have been documented and reported at many universities, including this one;¹ and

WHEREAS, Black and brown students, faculty, and staff are still underrepresented at this University, and many report insufficient support once arriving on campus;² and

WHEREAS, a recent, unanimous letter from the 2019-20 and 2020-21 University Senates Conferences (USC) to President Killeen contains preliminary advice for three system-level processes to address issues of structural and systemic racism, policing, and racial injustice;³ and

WHEREAS, further revision of, and the creation of new, campus-level policies and processes are necessary to address structural and systemic racism, policing, and racial injustice issues in a comprehensive and meaningful manner; and

WHEREAS, the Chancellor has recently announced a new “Call to Action to Address Racism and Social Injustice,” which will be overseen by the Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, to marshal the resources of this 21st-century land grant institution to combat systemic racism and generationally embedded racial disparities;⁴ and

WHEREAS this “Call to Action” will begin with a commitment of \$2 million in annual faculty grants, known as the “Chancellor’s Research Program to Address Racism and Social Injustice,” to support research on these topics,⁵ and will also charge four working groups (the “Call to Action Working Groups”)—modeled on the COVID-19 Planning Committee structure—to coordinate a campus-wide response to current issues related to race and racism at the campus, city, state, and national level;⁶ and

¹ For one recent example, see, e.g., <https://dailyillini.com/news/2019/09/03/student-arrested-after-a-noose-found-in-allen-hall>.

² See, e.g., <https://archives.library.illinois.edu/slc/oral-history-portal/project-500/>

³ See Appendix A.

⁴ See <https://massmail.illinois.edu/massmail/1982189843.html>.

⁵ See *Id.*

⁶ See Appendix B.

WHEREAS, this “Call to Action” includes a commitment to generating actionable recommendations within one academic year; and

WHEREAS, the Senate endorses acting in strong partnership with the Offices of the President, the Chancellor, and the Provost, whenever possible to ensure a meaningful response to racism in all its forms.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate supports efforts to dismantle racist attitudes, beliefs, systems, and actions at every level of University activity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate supports meaningful efforts to create a more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable environment around race and other protected classifications (including their intersections) at the University and within the larger Urbana-Champaign community of which the University is a key member; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate supports the three preliminary ideas for system-wide efforts described in the USC letter⁷—including the creation of a center modeled on the Discovery Partners Institute to address national problems relating to police reform and health disparities around race and other protected classifications; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate calls on the aforementioned Call to Action Working Groups (“Working Groups”) to use the University’s resources, including experts already on campus, to lead critical conversations and assessments regarding race and racism (including its structural, systemic, and implicit aspects), and the intersectionality of race with other protected classifications, at the University; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate calls on the Working Groups to assess and improve upon past diversity efforts in regards to teaching, learning, and research, as well as professional development, recruitment, and retention of diverse individuals, including students, faculty, and staff; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate calls on the Working Groups to conduct a thorough and timely assessment of campus security and policing (including at any off-campus sites where they operate); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this internal assessment of campus policing should include an evaluation of continuing education and professional development mechanisms or interventions that can disrupt undesirable police behavior and should explore other models (e.g., programs, institutes, partnerships, and alternative decisions regarding funding allocations) to ensure that campus policing does not foment injustice and bias within our community and is aligned with our University mission; and

⁷ *Supra* note 3.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate calls on the Working Groups to actively engage the community where the University resides; work with the local community to build coalitions of support and programs to enrich both the campus and the community in regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and facilitate partnerships between faculty and students and the broader community to affect change/reform at the local and national level.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY & INCLUSION

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University Senates Conference
378 Henry Administration Building, MC 348
506 South Wright Street
Urbana, IL 61801

June 25, 2020

President Timothy Killeen
364 Henry Administration Building
MC 346

Dear President Killeen,

Thank you for your recent reflections on the George Floyd tragedy and for your invitation to “make this outrageous act of aggression a pivotal point in history that begins to reverse generations of systemic racism and discrimination.” Thank you, further, for your request for the University Senates Conference (USC) to identify several concrete ideas that may help the University of Illinois System contribute to that goal.

This is indeed a pivotal moment in U.S. history. Recent events have helped many people begin to understand the deep suffering and danger that so many people of color—including many members of our own community—feel and are burdened by every day. Many who were previously unaware of this experience are beginning to feel they can see the invisible “water” all around them. Broader patterns in society connect the experiences of George Floyd with those of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and many others. Those broader patterns affect the mental health and wellbeing of many people of color within our communities. Hence, many are starting to look inward to ask what roles different institutions have played in sustaining these patterns and how to move forward.

The University of Illinois System is no stranger to grand challenges. When addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and issues of economic growth, the U of I System proved an indispensable leader within the state, the nation, and the world. Its special role derives from its nearly unmatched capacity to support and coordinate meaningful collaboration between some of the best minds in the country and external community and thought leaders. We believe the U of I System now has a similar opportunity to play a vital role in responding to the crisis of violence, racial injustice, and mental and physical health that recent events remind us still divide our state and nation and are hurting many members of our communities. At the same time, this is a moment when we must all listen harder and try to understand better the deep-seated beliefs, attitudes, and processes that sustain systemic racism and continue to produce senseless killings and traumatic experiences that impede learning and development.

Here are three meaningful ways that we believe the University of Illinois System should respond to the needs of the current moment:

1. Using Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) as a precedent, the U of I System could create a project team or center that brings multidisciplinary experts on all three campuses together with external community and thought leaders to develop cutting edge strategies to address structural issues around systemic racism, policing, and physical and mental health disparities within the nation and state. If we can marshal our knowledge and resources and collaborate with industry to build the state economy

and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, then we can contribute meaningfully to this grand challenge as well.

2. The U of I System could offer resources to support restorative processes and educational activities, starting in the Fall, to help our communities through this difficult period utilizing the expertise and experience at our three universities. Restorative activities could provide our communities with opportunities to build relationships across historic boundaries that move beyond tolerance and respect to solidarity and “understanding, redeeming good will for all” (MLK). In painful moments like these, it is important to go beyond justice and tolerance to show that we are genuinely concerned about those members of our communities who are struggling with current events, embedded in a much longer history of racial trauma.
3. Much as in the case of sexual harassment, the U of I System could prompt all three universities to engage in regular focus groups and culture and climate surveys around race—including the intersection of race with other vulnerable classifications. The universities could regularly review their policies and resources relating to racial harassment, campus policing, mental health, and pedagogy to ensure an educational climate that is inclusive, welcoming, and supportive of every member of our university communities. Because there are likely to be differences among the three universities on these issues, these processes should be university-based.

Finally, the USC would be interested in working with you—and perhaps the Board of Trustees—to identify and bring in community and thought leaders with whom we could all meet to enrich our understanding of problems related to these issues. We would be especially interested in learning more about the roles that higher education might play in addressing these problems. This continues to be an important time of listening and learning for us all.

Sincerely,

James Brennan	Lynn Fisher	Ann Strahle
Nicholas Burbules	Cecil Hunt	Michael Strosco
Roy Campbell	Jeffrey Eric Jenkins	Joyce Tolliver
John Dallesasse	Robin Kar	Helga Varden
Larry Danziger	William Maher	Catherine Vincent
Sandra De Groot	Aria Razfar	Magic Wade
Danilo Erricolo	Christopher Span	Min Zhan
	Mark Steinberg	

(This letter is unanimously signed by the 2019-2020 & 2020-2021 University Senates Conferences.)

c: Executive Vice President Barbara Wilson
Lynn Fisher, Chair, UIS Campus Senate
Robin Kar, Chair, UIUC Senate Executive Committee
Catherine Vincent, Chair, UIC Senate Executive Committee
Elizabeth Dooley, UIC Senate Office
Brenda Hunsley, UIS Senate Office
Jenny Roether, UIUC Senate Office

Call to Action Steering Committee

Work Team 1. Teaching and scholarship

Antoinette Burton - Director IPRH

Kevin Pitts - Vice Provost

James Anderson - Dean Education

Some five years ago, a US Minorities course was proposed for the UIUC campus. Student leaders hoped that it would make students more accepting and open-minded. Faculty hoped that it would train students to not focus narrowly on a specific major, but to think broadly and engage in life. Many signed a petition stating that “in the increasingly globalized and racially diverse society we live in, a complete education from this university should now include both a class in U.S. minority groups and a class in Non-Western cultures.” The expressed hope was that they would be better prepared for the interactions that will await them on campus and in the workplace.

- Was it successful?
- How do we build on it?
- Are there other mechanisms that can achieve the stated goals?

Similarly faculty and staff diversity are key components of being an excellent university. Such diversity enriches the learning environment we cultivate for our students and enriches and energizes our vibrant community of scholars.

- How do we go beyond target programs and instill diversity as a core value in our hiring?
- How do we create an environment that supports scholarship pertaining to diverse communities?
- How do we create professional development and engagement opportunities for staff and faculty that would have them remain engaged and truly thrive in our community of scholars?

Work Team 2. Diversity and a culture of inclusion

Antoinette Burton - Director IPRH

Kevin Hamilton - Dean FAA

Gio Perez - EAVC OVCDEI

Illinois makes a commitment to access that is inclusive of all talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity. The deliberations around the USMC and its subsequent creation, reflects the fact that diversity is an educational priority. Many units, departments and colleges have initiated diversity planning and assessment to increase access and retention of historically underrepresented populations, improve campus climate and inter-group/cross-cultural relations, incorporate diversity into the curriculum and program design, and utilize diversity as a resource for an enriched and engaged academic environment. But questions still remain as to how we can make the benefits of diversity available to all.

- How can we better foster interactions that result in better exchange, education and familiarization?
- How do we build a campus community that embraces and celebrates diversity?
- How do we foster a better sense of belonging on campus such that our students can be the agents for change after graduation?

Work Team 3. Policing and the criminal justice system

Mike Slosser - Director PTI

Margareth Etienne - Associate Dean Law School

The criminal justice system plays a significant role in the lives of many black and brown Americans. Beginning with suspensions and criminalization in the k12 environment and ending with the disproportionate use of lethal force. These are directly related to over-criminalization, due process, second chances, police practices, sentencing, and call into question the degree to which all citizens may engage in the American enterprise. The prominence of one of the oldest and largest police training institutes and the presence of nationally-recognized experts in the law school means that Illinois is uniquely positioned to move society forward.

- What are the appropriate roles for sworn officers and municipal police forces on or near campus?
- What are effective “continuing education” or professional development mechanisms or interventions that can disrupt the undesirable behavior on the part of police officers?
- Given the degree to which law enforcement is called upon to provide service to residents outside of criminal behavior, what does a modern “police” force look like?
- What are the necessary partnerships for law enforcement, residents and elected officials?
A significant number of students attend law school with the intention of learning the law in order to assist marginalized groups and individuals, change oppressive political and economic systems, and use legal strategies to advance social justice.
- Can the Illinois Law School be a place where students, faculty and staff are impactful, maintain their ideals, and remain healthy all while transforming the state and the nation?
- Are there models (programs, institutes, partnerships, etc) that would allow faculty and students to partner with the broader community to affect change/reform at the local and national level?

Work Team 4. Community Action and Public Engagement

Danita Brown Young

Wanda Ward

Community partnerships are a critical component for land grant universities to engage in serving the needs of the residents/citizens. Illinois' strategic plan states that "interaction with our community will be woven into the fabric of everything we do—from research and teaching to educational experiences to our external partnerships." We seek to create the partnerships and engagement that makes our commitment manifest. Such partnerships should advance economic and social progress in our neighboring communities and the state of Illinois and improve the way we prepare students to change society. We seek to bring together community leaders and university leaders to have a discussion, generate themes in order to set long-term and short-term goals, action plans, working groups, leads, check-in points, and timelines.

- How do we create an institution-wide commitment to civic engagement? Can we create commitment to community-building can be seen at every level of the university?
- How do we convene community leaders and campus leaders to create a partnership that better serves Urbana-Champaign and the state?
- Can we leverage the breadth, depth and expertise of the campus to dismantle systemic racism and reduce health care/outcome disparities in our community?
- Can we reduce barriers and promote diversity and equity among students through community-based work?
- How do we leverage the energy and enthusiasm our students have for change to create a better university-community integration and a better society?