

June 26th 2020

To the University of California Riverside Community,

The horrific deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and far too many other Black people at the hands of police are some of the most recent manifestations of systemic racism in a country founded on colonialism, slavery, and genocide. These tragedies have fanned the flames of over 400 years of activism, from slave revolts, through the civil rights and black power movements, to prison abolition and Black Lives Matter. Achieving racial justice requires revolutionary change at the personal, social, political, and economic levels. Although institutions of higher education often express a desire to promote diversity, more material and transformative action is obviously required.

In solidarity with Black Lives Matter, the UCR Black Student Union, Black Faculty and Staff Association, and countless other campus organizations, the Department of Evolution, Ecology, and Organismal Biology (EEOB) pledges to host a department-wide round table, and subsequently form a diversity and equity committee made up of faculty and students. This committee will examine fundamental ways in which the department needs to change, such as: working directly with existing initiatives at UCR to recruit and holistically support Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) undergraduate and graduate students; increasing hiring of faculty from diverse backgrounds; acknowledging and further educating ourselves about the racist formation of much of the modern field of biology; establishing and promoting collaborative DEI graduate student and faculty groups focused on anti-racist pedagogy within EEOB; and evaluating the response of the EEOB Department to issues of safety. More broadly, we call on the UCR administration to divest from UCPD, by which we mean an open exploration of alternative forms of UCR campus safety, along with the implementation of new strategies and anti-prejudice protocols; to increase the physical and monetary support for Black and Indigenous campus groups; and to develop a robust strategy to deal with crises, such as the current Covid-19 pandemic, that centers the needs of BIPOC students and prioritizes student physical and mental health.

We have much to learn and much work to do. We are listening and actively discussing our plan of action. We sincerely request your collaboration and feedback at (eeobDEI@ucr.edu).

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