



August 31, 2020

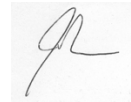
Dear Biochemistry Community:

In the past months, both faculty and student leaders of our department have been working on taking measures to combat racial injustice within the department now and into the future. During this time, we have taken concrete steps aimed to bring about short and long-term change to improve black representation in our department and build a welcoming and inclusive environment for underrepresented trainees. Below are four steps the department is taking immediately to combat racial injustice.

1. **Form a Biochemistry advisory committee for diversity and inclusion** with students, faculty, and postdocs serving on the committee. The main goal of this committee is to identify ways to improve diversity and inclusion within the department and ensure they are carried out. Moreover, the committee will ensure that these efforts remain active for the foreseeable future. The committee will advise department leaders and serve as a liaison between our community and the School of Medicine Basic Sciences.
2. **Actively recruit black faculty.** The Biochemistry department has taken strides to increase diversity by making inclusion intentional and remains committed to actively recruiting underrepresented faculty. We are also committed to hosting more black scientists for our Frontiers in Biochemistry series and inviting senior underrepresented postdoctoral fellows similar to what has been done with the Emerging Scholars Seminar series (Associate Dean Linda Sealy's program).
3. **Create an environment that promotes conversations about racial injustice.** We will be launching a BSA-led book, film, and discussion club with topics focused on unconscious bias, racism, white fragility, and racial injustice in STEM. The goal of this club is to increase the awareness of racial injustice in society and facilitate important conversations and discussions about racial injustice. We also plan to invite racial justice experts from both inside and outside of Vanderbilt to speak at *BSA colloquium* and participate in discussions with our students at our *Coffee and Conversations* event.
4. **Implement cultural awareness and unconscious bias training** for all Biochemistry faculty, postdocs and students. The *Culturally Aware Mentoring Workshop*, hosted by Associate Dean of Diversity Dr. Linda Sealy, is critically important training for our faculty who want to be on the open lab list for incoming IGP/CPB students. A large percentage of Biochemistry faculty has already taken this training and our goal remains that all faculty will participate. The BSA is looking into training options for our students, postdocs, and staff. One possibility is to have our trainees participate in the *Fairplay* workshop hosted by the BRET office.

The Biochemistry leadership is looking forward to working with the advisory committee to best address the issues of racial injustice and inclusivity in the Department and beyond at Vanderbilt. We are excited to implement the actions described above and we hope that members of our department will continue to engage in conversations about race and injustice.

Sincerely,



John D. York, Ph.D.
Natalie Overall Warren Professor of Biochemistry
Chair, Department of Biochemistry



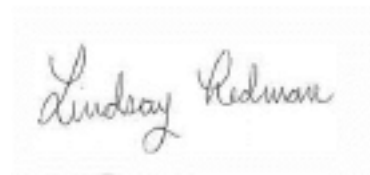
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