

June 22, 2020

Dear Member of the Department of Physics:

The past weeks have built tremendous momentum behind longstanding demands for change, with nationwide protests following the murders of so many Black Americans at the hands of police. We recognize that we are all responsible for combatting racism and all forms of discrimination.

The mission of the Department's Climate, Community and Diversity committee is to ensure that everyone in our department is safe and welcome, to live up to the academic values of true meritocracy and inclusivity where everyone is evaluated fairly and treated equally, and to account for demonstrated systemic biases.

We believe we need to do better and we need everyone's help. Please communicate with members of this committee your ideas, actions, complaints, accolades ... anything. If you want to join the committee, please let us know. Everyone is welcome. Everyone is needed.

As a committee we will, in the next few months, educate ourselves about effective institutional change. Recent task forces within physics and beyond have emphasized that "...underlying norms, values, and culture [must] be addressed before changes can occur." [AIP TEAM-UP Report, 2020]

Changing departmental culture will not be achieved with an itemized list of improved policies and new departmental procedures. We will need frequent discussions among all department stakeholders to reach a shared understanding of the need for change, a shared understanding of the appropriate mechanisms to achieve that change, and a mutual commitment to change.

Our committee does have an extensive list of specific items which we are happy to share. This list includes ideas such as improving the physical environment to reduce stereotype threat and increase the sense of belonging, and specific actions to boost the mentorship program at all levels. While it is important to have dedicated committee members going through the list of items - and we will continue to do so - it is also critical that the whole physics department community moves together to critically reflect on our departmental climate and discuss ways to improve it.

We see important opportunities for change in many areas such as the early years of graduate studies, the hiring of faculty, the recruitment of graduate students, and the mentorship and support structure for students, postdocs, faculty and staff.

Given the current Covid-19 situation and extensive civil unrest, it is more important than ever to strengthen the relationships that bind us all as a community. We hope you can find time to reflect and time to act.

In order to communicate our ongoing plans, provide transparency, and hold ourselves accountable for making positive changes, we will be adding a Climate/Inclusivity page to the department website. This will have additional resources for underrepresented students, information on allyship, and a list of our goals with updates on our progress.

We also recognize that our actions should go beyond the Department of Physics. We would like to take this opportunity to raise awareness of a few reports, statements and resources to which we link below.

The Physics Climate, Community and Diversity Committee.

Doug Cowen, Chair

Louis Leblond

Brett Green

Karrie Macknair

Eric Hudson

Källan Berglund

Yu Wang

David Wooten

Julianne Mortimore

Some Resources

- A well-researched letter from the Coalition of Graduate Employees at Penn State.
[Letter to President Barron: Anti-Racist Demands – Coalition of Graduate Employees at Penn State](#)
- A letter from the department of African American studies.
<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Ascds%3AUS%3A5fa8b8ac-ccaa-4c97-ba72-5b715d0dbe84#pageNum=1>
- The 2020 AIP National Task Force to Elevate African American Representation in Undergraduate Physics & Astronomy (TEAM-UP)
<https://www.aip.org/diversity-initiatives/team-up-task-force>
- Many links to previous reports addressing the needs of other underrepresented minorities can be found in the TEAM-UP report. For example, look at the 2018 National Academy of Science report on sexual harassment of women in academia
[Impacts of Sexual Harassment in Academia](#)
- A compendium of anti-racism resources:
<https://resources.asee.org/2020/06/18/anti-racism/>
- Books:
 - *How to Be an Antiracist*, Ibram X. Kendi
 - *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us (Issues of Our Time)*, Claude M. Steele
 - *An Inclusive Academy: Achieving Diversity and Excellence*, Abigail J. Stewart and Virginia Valian