

June 10, 2020

Ohio State addresses institutional racism

Measures include task force, seed funding for research and creative expression

The Ohio State University

The following message was sent to all Ohio State students, faculty and staff today.

Dear Ohio State Community:

Together, we grieve for George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor — and so many other black and brown people who have lost their lives as a result of institutional racism.

We are outraged, and we are all reflecting on what this moment means. We must be the change we want to see.

We support the citizens around the world, across the country and here in Columbus, including our Ohio State students, faculty and staff, who are demonstrating passionately but peacefully. We do not condone vandalism or other illegal behavior, and we simply will not tolerate aggression by police against peaceful protesters and journalists. We will continue to follow these actions closely, and we are seeking answers.

In close collaboration with other university leaders, I have been and will continue to be in active dialogue with the community and our students on these issues.

We are engaging in the following activities and taking the following steps:

Support for Citizens Review Board

I have reached out to Mayor Andrew Ginther, City Council President Shannon Hardin and others in city leadership to offer my support for the creation of an independent Citizens Review Board to review instances of alleged police misconduct, as recommended by the Columbus Community Safety Advisory Commission. I have asked that this board include an Ohio State student representative.

Fight Against Disparities in Health Care

On June 1, I testified in support of a Columbus City Council [resolution](#) that declared racism a public health crisis. The resolution passed and joined a previous [declaration](#) by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners. This further enables our efforts already underway at the Wexner Medical Center to mobilize and concentrate research and clinical efforts to end disparities in health outcomes in infant mortality, diabetes, COVID-19 and other conditions. The Ohio Senate is considering a similar [resolution](#), which I also support.

University Task Force

We are establishing a university task force to examine issues related to racism and racial disparities on our campuses and in our community. The task force will bring forward specific recommendations for changes to specific policies, processes, practices, programs and/or positions that will help us be a better example of the ideal university.

The task force will be chaired by James L. Moore III, vice provost for diversity and inclusion and chief diversity officer, and Tom Gregoire, dean of the College of Social Work. There will be diverse faculty, student and staff representation from across the university.

President-elect Kristina M. Johnson and I have spoken about this. She supports the establishment of this task force and is committed to seeing its work to conclusion after she takes the helm of our university on Sept. 1.

Fund for Research and Solutions

The Office of Research has partnered with the offices of Diversity and Inclusion and Institutional Equity (OIE) to establish a \$1 million fund to provide seed grants for Ohio State's research and creative expression community to study the causes and effects of, and solutions to, racism and racial disparities. A webpage describing the application process and funding parameters will go live in the coming weeks.

Forums

Scholars, researchers and leaders across the university are doing what Buckeyes do best and living up to our institutional motto, "Education for Citizenship." Critical and incisive discussions are occurring across our campuses, including "[The Role of the Land-Grant University in Addressing Racial Tensions](#)," organized by our Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI). ODI and OIE also have partnered with the Office of Academic Affairs to establish a [website](#) that serves as a clearinghouse for information and resources about forums and opportunities to contribute to fostering meaningful change.

For decades, university-wide initiatives such as the Young Scholars Program, Morrill Scholarship Program and others have helped push us forward as an institution. The success of these initiatives serves as a reminder that the work we do at the university is important — and has a far-reaching impact in Ohio and beyond.

I want to thank our students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends who have participated in these peaceful demonstrations. Our gratitude goes to journalists, including student journalists, who are covering these events. And our appreciation goes to all Ohio State community members who have been at the forefront of this issue.

During our 150th year we have taken meaningful steps to better exemplify the ideals of the modern 21st-century land-grant research university. In our 151st year and beyond, it is our challenge to be the model inclusive community of the future.

Sincerely,

Michael V. Drake, MD

Information and resources

- I encourage you to listen to the powerful message from incoming Ohio State student Playon Patrick, who delivered his poem "[2020 Quarantine Killings](#)" at a national virtual town hall that brought people together to discuss how we can move forward and at last transform our pain into change.
- [A call for renewed effort to address racial injustice](#).
- On Monday, June 15, from 3 - 4:30 p.m., the Office of Diversity and Inclusion will be holding its second virtual discussion about "[The Role of the Land-Grant University in Addressing Racial Tensions](#)." University thought leaders from several colleges, campuses and units will focus on current racial disparities and prospects for social change.
- Students, faculty members or staff may seek support resources or report incidents of harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to the Office of Institutional Equity at (614) 247-5838, equity@osu.edu or equity.osu.edu.
- For students, [counseling services](#) are also available through the Office of Student Life.
- Faculty and staff can seek [employee assistance](#) through the Office of Human Resources.
- For additional resources, please visit the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#), [Office of International Affairs](#) and [Office of Student Life](#).