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## Supporting our students & colleagues of color during times of Anti-Black racism in the United States

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To: SEAS-Faculty <SEAS-Faculty@umich.edu>, SEAS-Staff <SEAS-Staff@umich.edu>, SEAS-MS-Official <SEAS-MS-Official@umich.edu>, SEAS-Doctoral-Students-Official <SEAS-Doctoral-Students-Official@umich.edu>, SEAS Lecturers <seas-lecturers@umich.edu>, SEAS-Research-Fellows <SEAS-Research-Fellows@umich.edu>

Dear SEAS Community,

We are writing today to express our strongest support for the black community and condemn racism, police brutality, systemic injustice and violence in the strongest possible terms. We write with heavy hearts, and a commitment to action and supporting our community as we mourn the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Sean Reed, and as we remain infuriated by the inequities that continue in America today. At SEAS, equity and justice are at our core, and there's never been a more critical time to stand in unity and solidarity to reject and prevent all manifestations of injustice. As a nation, we must do better, and as a school, we must take an active stand against the structures that support racism and perpetuate the deaths of people of color.

At SEAS, we are continuing to work on an action plan to further prioritize DEI, racial equity, and justice, and to elevate the work of the DEI committee, which includes students, faculty, and staff representatives. The goal is to create a more direct and regular interaction between this committee and SEAS leadership. This summer, we will initiate a student-faculty partnership focused on improving the DEI and justice content of the courses SEAS offers. In fall, we will continue to increase DEI-related training for students, faculty and staff, and expand our efforts to build partnerships across the University of Michigan to understand and implement better ways to prioritize justice both on and off campus.

We support and rally behind all those at SEAS who are partnering with us to take action and implement solutions, including but not limited to the DEI Committee. We have enclosed a statement from the committee below. We also encourage members of the SEAS community to provide us with suggestions for actions that we can collectively take to ensure that as a school, we are taking an active role in fighting for racial equality. These recent events underscore long-standing, systemic challenges, and we must stand up against the structures that create the conditions for injustice at all levels.

We want to express our strongest support for the students, faculty and staff of color at SEAS, and all those who have felt personally impacted by recent events. We acknowledge the feelings they are having in this time of sadness and rage, and throughout a lifetime of experiences, and express our unwavering support. Please see the statement from the DEI committee below for student, faculty, and staff support resources, in addition to resources for taking action.

Thank you to all in our community who have called us to action. This is the time to stand up, united as one community for a more just and equitable world.

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### MESSAGE FROM THE SEAS DEI COMMITTEE:

*SEAS DEI Committee: Jose Alfaro, Bilal Butt, Stefania Casali, Kim Elliott, Cecilia Garabay, Sonia Joshi, Junghoon Park, D'Shaundra Payne, Nicole Rutherford, Sheila Schueller, Sam Stolper, Dorceta Taylor*

The events over the past few weeks have magnified institutional and systemic inequities in the African American community. When black people are subject to violence and intimidation for doing things many

privileged white people take for granted—jogging, bird watching, sleeping in bed or going to the store—it's time to do the work to change structures of privilege and racism by breaking the silence, speaking up by using platforms such as social media, classrooms and communities. These are the same inequities and structures that are compounding the health impacts of COVID-19 on the African American community. The SEAS DEI Committee sees these events as connected to racism, classism and other ideologies of suppression and violence. We see abuse of privilege and power, we see the intentional efforts to harm marginalized members of the community, we see racism and we condemn it. We are saddened by these recent murders and stand in solidarity with those working to end racial injustice through protesting and working within communities.

Racism is not tolerated within our SEAS community. Whether through [eliminating coded language](#) in courses and meetings, stopping the tokenization of marginalized voices for learning or by white members of our community learning to use their privilege to make space and support communities of color, we ALL can do something. We all have a responsibility to each other to do something. [Read up](#) on race in America and racism. [Speak up](#) each time you see news of another black person murdered. Silence is deafening. Stand up when you see a black person being harassed (stand beside the person, record the incident, use your privilege). Teach others and correct racist language when you hear it. Please know that three members of the DEI Committee have been trained through the [Racial Equity Institute](#) and other DEI committee members have received equity and anti-racism training. This fall, we will continue the Affinity Groups for marginalized and invisible identities that were launched last fall. Special thanks to Doctoral student Alex Cohen who has shared this great [Anti-Racism Resource list](#).

We recognize that everyone is compelled to respond and act in different ways. Some may need to step back and take care of themselves during these times, especially those who are already doing much of the emotional work. We encourage anyone who needs support to utilize our university's resources. [Faculty and Staff Counseling and Consultation Office](#) is available to staff and faculty and [CAPS](#), the university's counseling and psychological services, is available to support students. However, we encourage everyone to commit to breaking these systems of inequity, racism and violence. We also want to share the [message](#) from President Schlissel to our community and Chief Diversity Officer Robert Sellers's very powerful and [personal response](#).

In solidarity,

Dean Peck, Michaela Zint, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Ivan Eastin, Associate Dean for Research and Engagement

In partnership with the SEAS DEI Committee: Jose Alfaro, Bilal Butt, Stefania Casali, Kim Elliott, Cecilia Garabay, Sonia Joshi, Junghoon Park, D'Shaundra Payne, Nicole Rutherford, Sheila Schueller, Sam Stolper, Dorceta Taylor