

July 13, 2020

To: Bruce Harreld, President, University of Iowa

From: The Diversity Councils of the University of Iowa

JOINT OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT HARRELD: ON RESPONSIBILITY AND LEADERSHIP

Dear President Harreld,

The Diversity Councils fully support the Black Lives Matter movement and the Ulowa students, staff, and faculty who give their faith, energy, and even safety to fight for social justice. We are severely disappointed and frustrated by the University of Iowa's lack of meaningful response to the police brutality, protests, and calls from students, staff, and faculty to implement change for equity. Faculty, staff, and especially students perceive you and many other University leaders to be oblivious to the intense fear, struggle, and trauma that permeates the University of Iowa community each day.

When it comes to social justice and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion commitments, the trust between students, staff, and faculty and the top administration at the University of Iowa has been decimated. Students in particular are [traumatized](#), [tired](#), and [targeted](#). If the University truly seeks the inclusive and just future it claims to champion, our community needs to see personal, genuine commitment, and concrete, sustained action for equity. A new trust must be forged from this brokenness, and the Diversity Councils are ready and willing to be a resource for doing so.

To this end, we reiterate the question that the administrators of the Undergraduate Student Government and Graduate and Professional Student Government [offered](#) you at the beginning of June 2020: "How have not only the University of Iowa, but you yourself, contributed to the policing of lives, education, and voices of Black students on our campus?" Furthermore, we ask: How are *you* stepping into allyship right now?

In the [message](#) that you and Provost Fuentes published on May 31, 2020 in response to George Floyd's murder and the ensuing protests against the police brutality, you said that "[e]ach of us must lead change within our individual communities to actively disrupt racism (interpersonal, systemic, and societal)." It is your responsibility not only to enact this leadership that you explicitly call for, but also make it legible and relatable to the multiple individual communities of which you are a part as the president of University of Iowa, foremost being Black, Indigenous, and People of Color ([BIPOC](#)) students.

Importantly, you are also responsible for leading your administration both interpersonally and by example. When you do not assume this leadership, you promote dismissive attitudes such as was displayed by Dean Goddard in [his comments](#) to at-risk faculty and staff and faculty women of color at his June 1, 2020, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Town Hall. As the leader of

CLAS, Dean Goddard is clearly insensitive to equity and antiracism, but his public fumble also showcases how ill-equipped top administrators are as a team. We need informed collaborative interaction by top administrators -- and this, too, is your responsibility to implement.

Based on our experiences, expertise, and extensive campus conversations in recent weeks, we strongly urge you to take action on the following items:

1. Without defense or citing a list of well-intended actions/policies that your administration is implementing, **personally respond to BIPOC students** and their allies who have voiced their frustrations and fears to you. If their address is public, your response should be public. Accountability, transparency, and honesty are requisite to building trust. *For example, these are some student organizations' concerns that we are aware of:*
 - *Defund and cut ties with Iowa City Police Department and Iowa State Patrol*
 - *Provide more real time information regarding COVID-19 and how that impacts students and student workers*
 - *Make public a concrete plan for remote and in-person learning*
 - *Take measures to care for Black and POC student athletes*
 - *More transparency of senior leadership's approach to deconstruct systemic racism*
 - *Create an actionable plan to ensure the safety of BIPOC students, staff, and faculty, including addressing white supremacist threats*
 - *Clearly state the measures, programing, and compensation being offered to support BIPOC students, staff, and faculty who are continuously taxed*
 - *Support and protect International students from the [ICE SEVP 6 July 2020 mandate](#)*
2. The **immediate appointment of an Interim [Assistant Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)** who is an existing Ulowa employee, knows the culture and structure of the institution, and has built deep trust with BIPOC students and departments/units across campus. In addition, this position should be in the president's cabinet and report directly to you. The immediate need for clear and strong DEI leadership cannot be denied or put on hold any longer.
3. Utilize the **Diversity Councils' standing in [Shared Governance](#)** and *actually include us* in the decision-making processes that guide the institution. To wit, the updated [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan](#) mentions the Diversity Councils in numerous "completed," "completed and ongoing," and "in progress" actions, yet it is unclear how or that these steps have been engaged. Meet with us, listen to our insight, and tell us what you need. Diversity Council Leadership meets face-to-face quarterly; we will continue to hold a place for you and your administration to join us.

We offer our full-hearted support in turning these plans into action. The Diversity Councils' coalition commits to continued collaboration and transparency as we work for equity. We proudly represent and advocate for hundreds of Ulowa community members. We understand and embody the complexities and intersections of race, gender, culture, ability, religion, sexual orientation, immigration experience, and other social identities. Critically, we also know how race permeates through these differences. We offer our expertise and strengths to you and senior administration as willing partners in working to heal the deep wounds of mistrust, fear, and trauma in our communities.

With sincerity and great expectations,

The Diversity Councils of the University of Iowa

African American Council

Council on Disability Awareness

Council on the Status of Women

Latinx Council

LGBTQ+ Council

Native American Council

Pan Asian Council

CC: **Gary Barta**, director of athletics
Daniel Clay, dean of the College of Education
John Culshaw, Jack B. King university librarian
Tiffini Stevenson Earl, associate director and ADA coordinator, Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity; AVP DEI Incoming Co-chair
Steve Fleagle, associate vice president and chief information officer
Montse Fuentes, executive vice president and provost
Brent Gage, associate vice president for enrollment management
Russell Ganim, associate provost and dean of International Programs, AVP DEI Co-chair
Steve Goddard, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Sarah Hansen, vice president for student life
Brooks Jackson, vice president for medical affairs and dean of the Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine
David Johnsen, dean of the College of Dentistry
John Keller, associate provost for graduate education and dean of the Graduate College
Amy Kristof-Brown, interim dean of the Henry B. Tippie College of Business
Rod Lehnertz, senior vice president for finance and operations
Donald Letendre, dean of the College of Pharmacy
Peter Matthes, vice president for external relations
Bria Marcelo, director, diversity resources and strategic initiatives
Jennifer Modestou, director, equal opportunity and diversity, deputy title IX coordinator
Harriet Nembhard, dean of the College of Engineering
Edith Parker, dean of the College of Public Health
Nadine Petty, executive director, Center for Diversity and Enrichment; AVP DEI co-chair
Angie Reams, associate vice president of student life and dean of students
Cheryl Reardon, chief human resources officer and associate vice president; Path Forward DEI Work Group co-chair
Carroll Reasoner, vice president for legal affairs and general counsel
Martin Scholtz, vice president for research
Tanya Uden-Holman, associate provost for undergraduate education and dean of the University College
Kevin Washburn, dean of the College of Law
Julie Zerwic, dean of College of Nursing; Path Forward DEI Work Group co-chair