



SCHOOL OF  
L A W

June 16, 2020

Dear Seattle University School of Law Students –

We, the undersigned faculty of Seattle University School of Law, acknowledge that you, our students have called on us to act – to recognize the continuing effects of racism in and beyond our law school community, and to work for change. You are right – action is overdue, and we commit to doing better. This letter is a first step towards responding to the powerful messages we have received from SU’s Black Law Student Association, the Seattle Journal for Social Justice, and the signatories of the Student Statement of Solidarity. We have trained you to advocate, and you have met that challenge. Now, it is our turn to lead through example.

We want to begin by explicitly affirming our commitment to dismantling systemic racism and to say that we are inspired by your advocacy and proud to be on this journey with you. Black lives matter.

What follows are a set of responses to specific requests that we have heard. These responses often use phrases like “students of color,” and so we want to offer two caveats. First, we acknowledge that this moment was brought about by the Black Lives Matter movement, and it calls on us to focus on the experience of our Black students and community in particular, even as we acknowledge that racism also affects students of color who identify in other ways. Second, “students of color” is an imperfect term that does not capture the different ways that racism affects, for example, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, or Asian/Pacific Islander students, nor does it capture the reality of intersectionality. Finally, we want to be clear that this is only a piece of ongoing work in what we recognize must be a continuing dialogue.

We offer the following responses to some specific requests that we have heard:

- Recruitment and Admissions:
  - We commit to reviewing our admissions process to identify barriers for applicants of color; working to remove those barriers; and taking an active role in recruiting students of color, including meeting with high school and college students who might be interested in law in the future.
  - We will work to create a pipeline program with Puget Sound high schools that would generate a relationship with Black students and other students of color, and would foster an early interest in the possibility of a legal career. That program would also permit us to deepen our recruiting pool.
  - We commit to holistically reevaluating the policy linking scholarship retention to class rank, with a particular focus on its race equity impact. This underscores the importance of developing additional scholarship and financial aid resources, to ensure that financial need is not an obstacle to access to law school.

**FACULTY OFFICES**

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- Current Students:
  - We will work to ensure that students of color have the support they need to succeed at Seattle University, via professional organizations, student organizations, mentorship relationships, academic support, and counseling support.
  - We will work to make available support services, including race-informed mental health services, and we continue to advocate for those services to be made more widely accessible on-campus. What we have so far can be found in the attached resource. Other sources for our students can be found [here](#).
  - We commit to identifying and addressing microaggressions that occur in our classrooms. We will work to prevent our own, to create classrooms that reduce the probability that students will engage in microaggressions, and to ensure that all faculty members are equipped to respond to microaggressions that do occur. Undersigned faculty members commit to attending trainings and doing other necessary work to implement this in our own classrooms. We will also work with the University Diversity and Inclusion office to develop appropriate ways for the law school to effectively address student complaints, and to keep students informed of what is happening with their complaints in that process. We also commit to developing appropriate resolutions for such situations.
  - We will work on creating co-curricular programs to better prepare our white students to be effective allies.
  - We will advocate for increased funding and support for the University's Office of Diversity & Inclusion.
  - With respect to the six co-curricular organizations (4 journals, MC Board and DR Board), we advocate that the administration continue its ongoing re-examination of whether the current funding model optimally serves the school's interest in equitable access to the benefits arising from these activities. Our four journals have different histories, missions, and structures. Each plays an important role in our institutional identity, our engagement with external communities, and our students' development. With respect to other funding decisions within the Dean's discretion, we will advocate that priority be given to spending that supports race equity initiatives.
  - Following advocacy by students and recent graduates, Dean Clark (with the unanimous support of the faculty) successfully advocated that the Washington Supreme Court grant diploma privilege for our recent graduates.
- Faculty:
  - We will work intentionally to create a more diverse faculty, and in particular to recruit, hire, and retain Black, Indigenous, and Latinx faculty. Steps to do that include the following:
    - *Adjunct and visitor faculty.* We currently rely on adjunct and visiting faculty to teach a number of courses. When we identify a course to be taught by an adjunct or visiting professor, the law school should create a diverse pool of potential candidates, rather than relying on other recruitment methods (such as word of mouth). To do that, we should post openings widely, reach out to minority bar associations, and specifically invite people of color to apply for these positions. Then, we should ensure that the remainder of our hiring process

actually results in a racially diverse adjunct/visitor faculty. Finally, we should work to support and value these members of the SU community so that they want to continue teaching year after year.

- *Tenure and tenure-track faculty:*
  - When we next hire for a tenured or tenure-track faculty line, the Dean and the hiring committee should be clear that a key hiring goal is to create a more racially diverse faculty that better reflects the identities and experiences that our students bring to SU. Further, our efforts to retain junior faculty of color should include a recognition that faculty of color often perform extra (uncompensated) work, for example, supporting students of color. That work should be formally accounted for, for example by releasing the faculty member from other committee work.
  - We will advocate for more equitable balance in faculty workload that recognizes the dynamic described in the paragraph above. We also acknowledge that white faculty members cannot hide behind the work of our colleagues of color, and that white faculty members benefit when colleagues of color are disproportionately called upon to perform additional work that benefits our school and our students. And, we acknowledge and honor the work that many of our faculty and staff members, especially those of color, have already done to create a more inclusive community.
- *Guest speakers:* We will be more intentional about inviting racially diverse guest speakers to our classrooms. We will also try to find a way to compensate guest speakers for their time and effort. For example, while it is probably impractical to pay guest speakers, we should explore what would be required for guest speakers to get CLE credit for time spent in our classes.
- Campus Security: As the University's recent statement reflects, the law school does not have a formal institutional tie with SPD. However, some faculty (with students) will draft a statement supporting demilitarization/defunding for sign-on by faculty, staff, and students. And, we will call on main campus to invest in race-bias training for campus security.
- Join Protest & Actively Advocate for Black Lives:
  - On Friday we were more intentional about showing up institutionally and in larger numbers. Some faculty members have met and will continue to meet with students to support their protests and provide advice about how to protect themselves while protesting.
  - Some faculty are and have been involved in other work, including protesting, working on the *BLM v. Seattle* litigation, and holding teach-ins. (More information about the work of the Korematsu Center for Law & Equality on *BLM v. Seattle* and other cases is available [here](#).)
  - Dean Clark, joined by Dean Barnes (UW) and Dean Rooksby (Gonzaga), are co-chairs of a new ad hoc task force on race and Washington's criminal justice system. A research working group led by an SU faculty member will

work on a 10-year update to the [2011 Preliminary Report](#) on Race and Washington's Criminal Justice System. Like the first report, the updated report will examine structural racism and explicit and implicit bias in the criminal justice system. Like the first report, it is intended to foster persistent education and advocacy efforts.

We agree that our response has been too slow. And – while we recognize the important work already being done by faculty and staff, including the Access to Justice Institute, the admissions office, and many others – we admit that we have made mistakes and fallen short in serving the needs of our Black community, and our students of color more generally.

In other words, we commit to requiring more of ourselves and of each other. As we work toward being the institution that we aspire to be, we hope that you will join us in this effort. We know that we have made mistakes, and we know we will continue to do so. But we also know that we are committed to transforming ourselves individually and collectively. We will hold ourselves accountable, and we expect that you will hold us accountable as well. We invite you, our students, to share your ideas with us on how we can work together and continue to work with us to better build accountability into the institutional structure of our school.

Thank you for your passion, your empathy, and your advocacy. We are better for it. As we said in the beginning, there is no other choice than to do better. We promise that we will.

The following faculty have signed on to this letter as of June 16, 2020. We note that some faculty who have not signed on were simply unable to review this letter in the time available. Others hold differing views on particular drafting choices even as they support the letter's overall goals.

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