



June 16, 2020

Dear Seattle U Law Students:

I write to let you know that I have heard the call for justice from our Black Law Student Association, Journal for Social Justice members, and signatories of the Student Statement of Solidarity (signed by 773 individuals to date). Through this letter, I acknowledge my responsibility, as Dean of Seattle University School of Law, to lead us more effectively in living our mission of educating powerful advocates for justice. That responsibility includes affirming on behalf of our institution that Black lives matter, actively working to combat systemic racism, white supremacy, and police violence, and supporting and caring for our students and colleagues of color, with particular focus on our Black students and colleagues during this moment in history.

I acknowledge and offer my apology that the law school has been silent when we should have spoken, reactive when we should have been proactive, and defended the status quo when we should have been agents for change. We have too often failed in our obligation to help protect, support, and care for the members of our community who have been the victims of oppression, explicit and implicit bias, and microaggressions in the classroom and law school community.

A number of our Seattle University School of Law faculty have created their own letter of commitment, which accompanies this letter, and I pledge to work with the faculty on fulfilling their call to action. In doing so, I also make my own commitment as Dean to lead and direct the law school to do the following:

- Center the voices and lived experiences of our students of color in our decision-making processes, including setting up a monthly (or bi-monthly) check-in process by the administration with BLSA and other affinity group leaders to hear their concerns and seek their perspectives
- Develop and deliver a survey for students, faculty, and staff to measure their sense of belonging and inclusion in our law school community, and use the results of the survey to make changes in how we operate

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

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- Create a new faculty Standing Committee on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, and charge that committee with: (1) evaluating our diversity recruitment efforts; (2) evaluating our conditional scholarship policy, with particular focus on its impact on our students of color; and (3) assessing our course offerings and educational opportunities that address issues of racial violence, police brutality/accountability, and racial profiling
- Revise our digital and print marketing materials to make them more authentic and reflective of the actual experiences of our students of color at Seattle U Law, including the challenges they face
- Create a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion page on our website that highlights the anti-racist initiatives of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and Centers/Institutes, and create a prominent link to those pages on the website front page
- Draft and adopt a School of Law Learning Outcome (see <https://law.seattleu.edu/academics/curriculum/outcomes>) that goes beyond “cultural competency” and requires faculty to educate our students on structural oppression and racism within the legal system and their obligation as lawyers to advocate for change
- Add a section to the “Annual Report to the Dean” that is completed by each faculty member which asks the faculty to report on their diversity and inclusion efforts (with our students in their courses and classrooms, within their broader work in the law school and university, and within the community)
- Support the work of the SBA on its commitment to reallocate funding to student organizations and activities for our students of color to address historical and continuing inequities
- Work with the Social Justice Leadership Committee (SJLC) to complete the currently ongoing Racial Equity & Justice Initiative (REJI) audit of the law school, disseminate the SJLC report, and prioritize implementing the report’s recommendations
- Expand our Student Emergency Fund to include racially-informed mental health counseling for our students and recent graduates and put out a call to faculty, alumni, and friends of the law school to contribute to the fund for this purpose
- Create and implement policies that will hold us accountable to our commitment to hire professors, administrators, and staff of color so that we can better serve and support our diverse student body
- Devote a portion of each monthly faculty meeting and each Deans & Directors meeting to reviewing and assessing our progress on implementing these racial justice initiatives

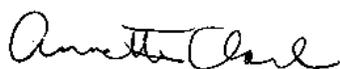
In setting out these commitments, I want to publicly acknowledge that we have a significant issue with regard to faculty diversity, which will be made worse by the fact that Professors

Carmen Gonzalez and Bryan Adamson are leaving us this summer to join other law schools (Loyola Chicago and Case Western Reserve respectively). I worked hard to keep them and offered the inducements I had available to me, but the end result is that we are losing two of our most valued faculty members who were instrumental in our efforts to create and maintain a welcoming and inclusive educational community for our students of color. We are currently operating under a university-wide hiring freeze, so the law school administration and faculty are going to need to advocate within the university to address this issue, and we will need student voices to help us. I will also note that my time as dean will come to a close within the next couple of years, so the law school and university will have the opportunity to make a significant statement on the importance of centering racial justice and inclusion when hiring the next dean of Seattle University School of Law. I urge you to be involved in that process as well.

Finally, I want to honor the advocacy efforts of our Student Bar Association leadership and our graduates in requesting that the Washington Supreme Court grant a diploma privilege for July and September bar registrants. Although credit is appropriately being given to the faculty for unanimously supporting the letter to the Court, it was the foundational work of the SBA leadership and the narratives provided by our graduates that ultimately won the day. The SBA, working with their counterparts at UW and Gonzaga, created the original proposal for a diploma privilege and provided incredibly effective advocacy before the WSBA and with the Court. Their call to action, supported by poignant and harrowing narratives from our graduates describing the burdens they were experiencing in preparing for the bar exam and how those burdens were falling disproportionately on our students of color and the economically disadvantaged, were what ultimately persuaded the justices to grant the diploma privilege. It was a lesson to me in the importance of using our positions of power to amplify the voices of our students and graduates, and one I will not forget.

I take responsibility for the ways in which our actions have failed to live up to our words, and I am focusing on concrete actions going forward. I commit to working with you and for you in the coming days on these matters that are vital to our students and our law school community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Annette E. Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Annette E. Clark
Dean and Professor of Law