



Commitment and call to action in response to recent violent acts against Black communities  
June 1, 2020

Dear UC San Diego Community,

1. The Graduate Student Association of the University of California, San Diego (GSAUCSD) is the official representative body of over 8,000 graduate and professional students at UC San Diego. Today, we overwhelmingly condemn the recent murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and David McAtee by White police officers and others. These deaths come during a health crisis and economic recession which are already disproportionately affecting the Black and Brown communities. We stand in full support of #BlackLivesMatter in their fight to bring about “a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise.”
2. We recognize that these racist acts of violence against Black people are deeply rooted in a White supremacist system and fueled by hate and fear of minoritized groups who are seen as inferior simply because of their skin color. We acknowledge that our University functions within said White supremacist system, and with our past silence and inaction, we are often complicit in a system of discriminatory policies that oppress people of color, especially the Black members of our UC San Diego community.
3. In acknowledging that this statement risks being lost in a wave of other platitudes, we also intend to use this space to publicly outline actions that the GSA commits to over the next year to break down these racist structures within the GSA in particular and UC San Diego in general. We also call upon students, faculty, and university administration to act, and outline our recommendations for such actions below.

In the [2017 GPSES](#) survey (p.41), 27.0% of URM graduate students and 33.3% of international graduate students stated that attitudes towards their race or ethnicity posed challenges to their academic progress. We call upon our graduate & professional student community, especially our non-Black members, to:

- Pause and reflect on your position in the racialized social structure and acknowledge the various ways in which you benefit from it. It is easy to jump into the fray of activity, virtual or otherwise, right now. But for these acts, as important as they are, to carry meaningful impact beyond the short term, they must be accompanied by honest and critical reflection.
- Educate yourselves and other non-Black colleagues on these issues, no matter how difficult and uncomfortable such topics may be. If you don't know where to start, [this webpage](#) is a recommendation. You can also find definitions for common terms used in racial equity discussion [here](#).
- Speak up and condemn any racist comment or action you encounter - on campus, online, within your own communities. Elevate the voices of Black & Brown people around you - listen and make space for them to share their stories.
- Participate in campus activities and committees in which policies are created which can move us towards a more equitable environment. Consider volunteering to support the Black Resource Center and other campus community centers.



We, GSAUCSD, commit to the following new and ongoing actions:

- Perform an internal evaluation of the organization and how it is currently representing and advocating for graduate students from minoritized groups on campus. This audit will include the way its general council and various committees are constituted, the issues that have been taken up and not acted upon in the previous years, and the opportunities and barriers for all students in accessing the GSA to advocate for themselves and others. The report and consequent actions by the GSA will be publicly shared by the end of the Fall 2020 quarter.
- Maintain dialogues of student representatives with various campus entities charged with responding to incidents of hate and discrimination on campus so that they are held accountable to the student community.
- Ensure that UCPD is made aware of student concerns and is held accountable for acting on this feedback to ensure that instances of racial profiling and violence against students of color do not occur.
- Partner with CAPS and campus community centers to create spaces that facilitate student reflection on the racial climate of the University and the Country and that foster healthy allyship with minoritized communities.
- Extend all possible support to CAPS and the campus community centers to provide and maintain spaces for students belonging to minoritized communities as they negotiate their experiences of the University and the Country.

We urge our faculty to:

- Check in on your graduate students and create a safe space for these conversations. Many students feel uncomfortable bringing these issues into “professional training” environments, but these are precisely the places we must be talking.
- Recognize that your students, your teaching assistants, and your researchers are struggling with these events. Grant them compassion and leniency to enable their academic success in this time of great distress.
- Demand and, when possible, create stronger and more effective systems of accountability for protection of students in a system that resists accountability and dehumanizes graduate students for their labor. This includes providing mentees opportunities to evaluate their mentors and programs and providing anonymous reporting systems to address student concerns.
- Demand and, when possible by those qualified, create better diversity and mentorship training from the University for all faculty to identify and prevent policies and actions causing harm to your students.
- Advocate for a revision of the Academic Review tenure process to include a fourth item encompassing EDI efforts by each faculty member that is weighted equivalently to the existing three of research, teaching, and university/public service.
- Re-evaluate the purpose and structure of UC San Diego’s Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion requirements and pedagogies to ensure that courses are effective, meaningful, and up-to-date with recent events.



We request that the Administration:

- Review, with full transparency, and recognize the systematic practices within our University that perpetuate intolerance, discrimination, marginalization, and bigotry towards minoritized groups.
- Systematically embed equity oriented proactive, preventative actions, training, and community-building initiatives that do not additionally burden people of color, in addition to reactionary measures, as required by competitive funding agencies.
- Increase transparency and reporting around both UC-wide and campus-based Police Task Forces in order to solicit feedback from graduate students to ensure policies and practices align with students' safety and inclusivity on campus.
- Develop stronger accountability mechanisms on campus by requiring evaluation of mentors and teachers from an EDI perspective and providing the currently lacking but necessary resources and autonomy to the Office of Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination.
- Strengthen the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion [Accountability process](#) initiated in 2019-20 by increasing the level of public engagement in the process every year.
- Partner with faculty to re-examine the purpose and structure of UC San Diego's Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion requirements and pedagogies to ensure that courses are effective, meaningful, and up to date with recent events.
- Develop and implement, in partnership with the graduate student community, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion requirements for all graduate and professional students as a requirement for graduation at all degree levels.
- Regularly and publicly state support for UC San Diego students and the pursuit of justice in the face of institutional racism.
- Commit to fully supporting CAPS and the campus community centers as they build and maintain spaces for students belonging to minoritized communities to navigate their experiences in the University and the Country.
- Act to reduce the active police presence on campus.

Finally, we entreat every member of our community to engage with the political system as much as possible and vote in the November election and future elections. Learn about the candidates and push them on the difficult topics of race and police-community relations. Voting is the most powerful tool we have, and it is our duty to elect the leaders who will enact the changes we hope to see.

In solidarity,

The Graduate Student Association of The University of California, San Diego