

June 30, 2020

Dear EEMB Faculty, Staff, and Administration,

Thank you for issuing a statement in support of Black graduate students in EEMB. While we appreciate your statement of solidarity, we feel that mere words are not sufficient -- we wish to see actual institutional changes within EEMB and at UC Santa Barbara. As Black students in academia, the challenges that we have faced as a result of being underrepresented students in EEMB--and the environmental sciences, as a whole--require systemic change. To address the inequities that we regularly face as graduate students, **we need you to demonstrate your commitment to anti-racism by implementing long-term, lasting solutions that will better serve Black graduate students and improve the quality of life for diverse students in EEMB.**

We recognize the EEMB Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is drafting a more informative, detailed letter. However, we Black students in EEMB call specific attention to the following demands of the EEMB administration below:

1. **Establish Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) to be released to the EEMB community for further comment:** EEMB administration needs to create a strategic, transparent roadmap for improving diversity, equity and inclusion outcomes within EEMB. This roadmap should then be released to the EEMB community for public comment, and community feedback should be used in revising and updating the DEI plan for the school.
2. **Improve EEMB's capacity for implementing DEI objectives:** Currently, the burden of improving DEI outcomes within EEMB is largely the burden of graduate students. Specifically, the EEMB DEI Committee was established by three graduate students of color. However, there already exists an undue burden on diverse graduate students who must continually advocate for themselves and their fellow students without pay in addition to their teaching and research duties.

To ensure that the EEMB's DEI objectives are met, the EEMB administration should hire a staff member (of at least 0.5 FTE) to address diversity issues in the EEMB community. This DEI staff member should meet the following requirements:

- a. be trained/have experience with working in higher education and serving the needs of diverse students and faculty
- b. be well-versed in understanding UCSB's process for reporting incidents of bias.

Additionally, staff members should meet with, and report to, both the Associate Dean of DEI and graduate students serving on the EEMB's DEI Committee.

3. **Establish a pipeline for underrepresented student recruitment:** To begin recruiting diverse students of color earlier in the education pipeline, EEMB administration should leverage existing partnerships with other UCSB departments, institutions and non-profit organizations that specialize in outreach to students of color. The letter from the DEI committee lists many examples, but we have included a few more:

- a. Expand recruitment of graduate students to include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), Tribal Colleges and Universities, other UCs, and the California State University system.
- b. Expand recruitment of diverse students from existing diversity recruitment programs associated with the aforementioned institutions, which include:
 - i. California Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education
(<https://www.caldiversityforum.org/>)
 - ii. UC-HSI Doctoral Diversity initiative
(<https://www.ucop.edu/graduate-studies/initiatives-outreach/uc-hsi-ddi.html>)

4. Address barriers to admission for Black and other underrepresented applicants:

EEMB administration should make sure that EEMB's admission requirements and student selection processes are transparent and centered on holistic review through:

- a. Taking concrete measures to reduce unconscious bias in the admission process.
- b. Removing requirements that discourage diverse applicants from applying to EEMB:
 - i. Removing GRE requirements from graduate school applications, which are poor predictors of graduate students' success.
 - ii. Eliminating EEMB application fees, which may be prohibitively high for students applying to multiple programs.

5. Diversification of EEMB's annual trainings: EEMB relies on using annual online trainings to ensure a safer learning environment for students, such as cyber security and sexual harassment. However, these trainings do not address racism, homophobia, transphobia, religious discrimination, and other forms of bias. The EEMB administration should ensure that annual trainings include the following items:

- a. *Bystander intervention training.* It is imperative that students, staff, and faculty are trained to not only recognize incidents of bias but also in strategies to interfere in these incidents as they occur. Existing campus resources skilled in offering bystander intervention training could include UCSB's Office of DEI, Office of Black Student Development, Assistant Director of Mental Health Initiatives and Inclusion, etc.
- b. *Official documentation for EEMB's Pillars of Respect.* Additionally, the EEMB administration must create official documentation for "Pillars of Respect" for the EEMB department, outlining acceptable behavior based on EEMB's Strategic Plan for improving DEI and any existing codes of conduct at UCSB. This should also be added to the EEMB Graduate Student Handbook for easy reference by students and faculty.

6. Faculty, staff, and graduate students should receive annual training on anti-racism and LGBTQIA+ issues: Faculty, staff, and graduate students have a role in ensuring that EEMB is an inclusive environment for all students, and should embrace the intersectional nature of Black student identities and needs. To achieve this, EEMB administration should provide annual, mandatory training that equips faculty, staff, and graduate students with the capability to address institutional racism.

- a. Such trainings should ensure that all faculty, staff, and graduate students are educated about special issues for students, including, but not limited to, students identifying with the following identities:

- i. *LGBTQIA+ students*
- ii. *Students with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and/or non-neurotypical students*
- iii. *Non-traditional students*
- iv. *Graduate student parents*
- v. *Students for whom English is not a first/native language*

7. Establish clear protocols for timely responses to acts of aggression, violence, and bias against students who identify with marginalized groups: EEMB administration should create a clear protocol for responding to incidents of bias against students, faculty, or staff members that belong to a marginalized group. An effective response could include:

- a. *Supportive statements.* Issuing a supportive statement addressing the incident to both the general community and to those belonging to the underrepresented group targeted by the incident of bias.
- b. *Actions to prevent/minimize future incidents of bias.* Including a list of actions that EEMB administration will take to minimize/prevent future incidents of bias, and alleviate distress caused by the incident.
- c. *Encourage students to speak up and connect them with campus resources.* Inform EEMB about how marginalized students, faculty and staff can ask for help and locate resources in EEMB and UCSB that will allow them to care for themselves and their community.

8. Increase recruitment of Black faculty, via:

- a. *Wide distribution of job search announcements.* EEMB administration should ensure that job search announcements are distributed widely, especially to institutions that train diverse postdocs and PhD students. Job searches/distribution of announcements should not be limited to the EEMB community, as it currently lacks racial and ethnic diversity.
- b. *Consult with external departments.* EEMB administration should consult with departments who have been successful in hiring and retaining Black and diverse faculty (e.g. Environmental Studies).

9. Support for alumni and recent graduates of color: The fields of Ecology, Evolutionary, and Marine Biology can be difficult for people of color to work in after graduation, as the workplace often lacks ethnic and racial diversity. As the only person of color in the workplace, diverse graduates can expect to be the sole "representative" of their respective culture in the workplace. In addition, diverse environmental professionals are often tasked with self-advocacy and fighting for inclusivity in the workplace in addition to our regular duties. These additional mental and emotional burdens are a systemic problem in both academia and within the workplace, and these struggles surely cause many students from marginalized identities to leave academia and/or exit the environmental (and STEM) fields.

To ease the transition of EEMB students into the workforce, EEMB administration should create a strong EEMB alumni of color network by establishing a formal mentorship program for students of color who are looking for support and advice in the workplace and academia.

10. Improve diverse recruitment and support for underrepresented postdoctoral scholars in EEMB: As an institution committed to training the next generation of environmental leaders and researchers, EEMB has a duty to recruit, train, and retain racial and ethnic minority postdoctoral scientists at a pivotal point in their careers. These scientists create a diverse recruitment pool for tenure-track faculty and lecturers for the department and greater environmental sciences field.

As a school committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, we implore you to heed to the actionable demands we thoughtfully outlined.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Childress, Imani Russell, Terence Leach, Adriane McDonald, and Nicola Paul
(Black Graduate Students of EEMB)