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UCSF Graduate Student Petition

Dear Graduate Division Leadership,

We are writing to express our strong support for the Graduate Division to take a clear and public stand against the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and all other victims of police brutality. We also ask the Graduate Division to take a public stand against the epidemic of police brutality against Black people and Black communities. We believe that as scientists, it is our duty to use our voices and privilege to demand systemic change in our government and our institution.

Inaction in the face of recent events represents complicity and perpetuates various forms of racism and inequity in our community at UCSF. As an institution, UCSF prides itself as a leader in “advancing health worldwide” yet, in this instance of the public health crisis that is racism, it has limited itself to academic influence. We need ongoing committed leadership from all faculty and staff on this issue, not just from those whose jobs focus on equity or diversity.

The UCSF Graduate Division explicitly states that their mission is to “foster the highest quality of graduate education and postdoctoral training; to help graduate programs grow and evolve to meet the changing demands of science and needs of society; to nurture an inclusive and supportive learning environment; and to ensure that every graduate student and postdoc at UCSF can look forward to a meaningful and personally satisfying career.” To uphold these values, we demand that the Graduate Division take the following actions:

- (1) Issue a statement in support of the right to protest during the COVID-19 pandemic and acknowledge that anti-racism protests are essential in creating systemic change in this country. This statement should explicitly state that students will have the full support of the Graduate Division should any conflicts arise with their advisors, PIs, or other faculty members.
- (2) Condemn police use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and all other forms of violence against protestors. These methods are inhumane and in the case of tear gas, banned in international warfare under the Geneva Protocol and the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention. In an online petition started at University of Washington and created with Dr. Peter Chin-Hong of UCSF, infectious disease physicians and Public Health officials have decried the use of tear gas against protestors during the COVID-19 pandemic as it increases transmission risk and spread by “making the respiratory tract more susceptible to infection, exacerbating existing inflammation, and inducing coughing.” We ask that as scientists, we add to this growing voice of concern.
- (3) Issue a statement in support of the current movement to defund UCPD and demand that other academic institutions, specifically other University of California campuses, follow to defund police. Demand that funds be used to expand student mental health and wellness services, such as hiring more psychologists with diverse methodologies centered around cultural humility and competence, and CARE advocates to satisfy the high demand for mental health providers for UCSF graduate students.

(4) Compile and continually update a list of resources related to local anti-racist organizations, events, and resources. If current staff are at capacity or not involved in such efforts, then hire a dedicated staff member or create a paid position for a student who is already involved in this work to be formally recognized.

(5) Prioritize and greatly increase transparency about the steps the Graduate Division is taking to create tangible and structural change at UCSF. This information should be published on the Graduate Division's website in an easily accessible and maintainable manner. For example, send out regular email updates regarding: hiring practices and how they ensure representation from communities that are under-represented in academia; how funding and spending are aligned with anti-racist values; and recent and upcoming implicit bias, equity, and social justice trainings that faculty, students, and staff are required to attend.

(6) To ensure that the following three demands (7-9) are effectively met, the Graduate Division must hire an expert, with student input, on topics of systemic and institutionalized racism in higher education to design and lead the following trainings:

(7) Require all UCSF faculty to receive mandatory yearly training on how to effectively mentor across differences, in particular underrepresented minorities, and how to be an active ally to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) graduate students. All faculty must attend, regardless of whether they currently have graduate students in their lab or not. Faculty must be held accountable for their progress in implementing said training by the Graduate Division and the dean of their corresponding school.

(8) Require all UCSF security workers and shuttle drivers to attend a yearly, mandatory training on racism and implicit bias. Humans of UCSF is a collective of BIPOC on campus that was formed to promote anti-racism and bring attention to instances of racism and discrimination on campus. A common theme they have highlighted are experiences of racial profiling of BIPOC showing UCSF employees as the perpetrator, thus the demand for anti-racist training of employees must also be met. Accountability by tracking how the training is being implemented must be publicly available.

(9) Require all current and incoming UCSF PhD students to attend an academic training course at the start of the academic fall quarter on race, racism, and social justice, including curricula on white supremacy, white privilege, white fragility, and implicit bias to help ensure accountability for biases, prejudices, and understanding privileges. Faculty and/or graduate student volunteers should NOT be expected to carry the burden of designing and leading a course in which they have no expertise and do not receive compensation for. Until this course can be devised, this material should be incorporated into all first year orientations, third-year orientations, Responsible Conduct of Research, and similar programming with the support of faculty and staff who are knowledgeable on this topic.

(10) The addition of a "Racism in Science" mini course that covers topics on how scientific research has benefited from systemic racism and the exploitation of Black populations (e.g. Tuskegee syphilis research study, the story of Henrietta Lacks, Cincinnati Radiation Experiments, to name a few).

(11) Commit faculty meeting time to planning long-term actions including: hiring more Black faculty, reviewing existing criteria for tenure to create more inclusive standards, and requiring faculty to go through implicit bias training. Additionally, the Graduate Division must push schools and programs to improve the transparency in hiring practices and allow for student input during the hiring process. For example, allowing students to meet potential candidates over lunch and providing comments to the hiring committee.

(12) Commit to changing admissions procedures to admit more Black students and other underrepresented minorities. These changes can include removing financial barriers for graduate students by waiving application fees, investing in fellowships to recruit more historically marginalized students, prioritizing the presence of BIPOC students at recruitment events, strengthening collaborative long-term relationships with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU), actively identifying, supporting and recruiting students from under-resourced schools, to name a few.

(13) Establish a Bias Incident Response Team to better equip the university to support students and counteract incidences of bias, microaggressions, and racism. The Bias Incident Response Team should follow similar metrics from the [Racial Justice Report Card](#) and it should have representation and input from BIPOC students, and include formal recognition through payment and/or educational credit.

(14) Require meeting notes from the quarterly Faculty-Student Diversity Committee meeting to be made available to all graduate students. The goals of the Faculty-Student Diversity Committee are to: increase diversity of the graduate student population and ensure graduate programs foster an inclusive and supportive learning and training environment; integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion as a key component in the success and wellbeing of the graduate, postdoctoral, and faculty experience at UCSF; and share best practices on current strategies and identify gaps in recruitment and retention of underrepresented scientists. Therefore, this committee must prioritize input from BIPOC students.

(15) Promote interdisciplinary efforts and accountability by evaluating the current anti-racist programs and policies enacted by each school, publishing the results on the Graduate Division webpage, and subsequently support the amelioration of disparities across schools and across programs.

We ask that these requests 1, 2, and 3 are completed by June 30, 2020. We ask that requests 4 and 5 be completed by the start of the 2020 fall quarter. We ask that requests 6 through 15 be completed by the start of the 2021 fall quarter.

*Please refer to petitions from PSPG, BioE, etc. for program specific demands.

*Adapted from UC Davis Department of Public Health students Sarah Muchleck and Sarah Danley.

Sincerely,

UCSF Graduate Students

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