

To Dean Murthy, Associate Dean Brandenburg, Associate Dean Wesel, Faculty, Staff, and Students of the UCLA Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science,

On Thursday, June 4th, 2020, as a response to the egregious murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Nina Pop, Tony McDade, and so many others, Dean Murthy and Associate Dean Brandenburg hosted a virtual Listen and Share designed for Black students to share space and grieve in a safe environment. While Black staff, faculty, undergraduate, and graduate students appreciated the opportunity to express ourselves, this was the first time during our respective times at UCLA that we have all had the opportunity of being in the same space together. For most of our time here at UCLA, we have felt unseen, unheard, and erased by blanket statements referring to anti-Black systemic issues as “People of Color” issues. It is unacceptable that the reason UCLA’s entire Black Engineering community was brought together for the first time, formally or informally, was due to the horrendous killings of Black individuals compounded by a pandemic that disproportionately impacts Black people. The inability to provide a space for the Black engineering community to commune, organize, and work together scratches the surface of the UCLA Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Sciences’ (HSSEAS) negligence of the well-being of their underrepresented members.

The STEM community has made numerous statements against racism, and as a reflection of national trends, we have been told several times in the last few weeks that the UCLA HSSEAS supports us and stands with us in solidarity. In her letter to the Engineering School, Dean Murthy stated that:

“In times like these, silence implies complicity. We must raise our voices to assert that Black lives matter, and that it is our collective duty to stop bigotry, brutality and bias against our fellow citizens. Most importantly, we must resolve to examine ourselves, both individually and as a school, and to find solutions to address racial bias within our own communities.”

These words must be followed with immediate action. It is well-established that anti-Black violence and racism is entrenched in STEM, particularly engineering, and for far too long, UCLA HSSEAS has shown us that our comfort is not its priority. For example, when the university boasts of diverse students and faculty, we know from our own classroom experiences that they do not refer to Black people. According to data published by the [American Society for Engineering Education](#) during the 2019-2020 academic year, the UCLA Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science had an undergraduate population with only 35 (0.88%) students who identified as Black. At the graduate level, the numbers are similarly reflected with on-campus master’s enrollment yielding 1 (0.13%) student who identified as Black and doctoral enrollment indicated that a mere 10 (0.96%) students identified as Black. **There are no Black professors in the departments of Materials Science and Engineering, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, Bioengineering, Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Computer Science.** This leaves Black Engineering Students feeling isolated and without any meaningful opportunities for professional mentorship. These data support the systemic neglect and complete marginalization of the Black Community within the UCLA Henry Samueli

we need to see concrete steps towards including us in the school's narrative.

As Black undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral scholars of the UCLA School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, we call on faculty and administrators to immediately address the continued lack of diversity within our division. Although diversity initiatives within HSSEAS currently exist, the overwhelming disparity in the representation from Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) at all levels in our division proves that these programs alone are insufficient. The Black Engineering community at UCLA demands that the division take the initiative to immediately improve efforts to recruit and retain Black students and faculty. We have come together to outline some of our community's most pressing needs:

1. Fund Initiatives That Move Forward Equitable Change

While the state of California is about 6% Black, Los Angeles is 10% Black, and the nation is 13% Black, UCLA HSSEAS's current faculty and student populations do not reflect these demographics. In order to truly commit to equitable change without making the work an additional "burden" on existing senior-level faculty, administrators need to provide adequate funding towards hiring staff and promoting initiatives that will be used towards retaining Black Undergraduate and Graduate Students, Postdocs, and Faculty across all engineering departments.

We demand that funding reflects the population it serves by distributing at least 13% of the \$100 Million Dollar Samueli [gift](#) between the efforts of (1) the recruiting of Black undergraduate and graduate students, (2) the retention of Black undergraduate and graduate students, and (3) the recruiting of Black postdocs, staff, and faculty including the creation of endowed positions and chairs named after prominent Black alumni.

We demand that the engineering school maintain at least 6% Black tenure-track faculty by 2030 to reflect the diversity of the state of California. Until that target is reached, we demand the administration commits to hiring Black tenure-track faculty annually until the goal is met. The engineering school must make demonstrated progress towards this goal annually and reach at least half of the goal by 2023.

We demand that this funding will include the establishment of a Black Engineering Office with paid full-time employees that address the needs of students, faculty, staff and alums, as well as the establishment of a Task Force that includes faculty, staff, students, and alumni to address issues year-round.

2. Make the Hiring Process More Transparent and Intentional

We demand more transparency with the hiring process of incoming faculty in HSSEAS. It has already been noted that several departments within HSSEAS have no Black faculty, and we want answers to why there hasn't been substantial progress in recruiting underrepresented candidates.

committee and the names of all candidates for the position be made public immediately after a hiring decision is made.

We further demand that future hiring committees include both a Black graduate student representative and faculty and staff that are champions for diversity within the school. This graduate representative will also be an ambassador to undergraduate students and will get input and feedback from them during the hiring process. Compensation should be provided to these diversity champions and graduate students serving on the committee for their time and labor.

Lastly, we demand that HSSEAS make a statement detailing how their search committee identifies viable candidates, and make a commitment to hire through diverse pathways such as the [UC President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program](#).

3. Provide Dedicated Space for Black Engineering Students

We demand that the school provides a dedicated space for Black students within the Samueli Engineering School. For far too long, the Black Engineering community has been small and scattered. This lack of connection, as well as our daily encounters with systemic and institutional racism, diminishes our mental and academic well being. Currently, the UCLA chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) has been allocated some space that is shared amongst several other student groups and has only 1 access key. This does not provide adequate safe space for Black students. The proposed location will serve as a safe space where Black engineering students can foster an enriching environment that promotes academic stability, emotional security, and mental wellness in order to increase the retention rate of Black students.

We demand for the designation of a Black meeting space conveniently located in Boelter Hall as reopening of school in the 2020-2021 school year. The space will be at a central location in Boelter Hall and will be free of any functions or offices unrelated to the wellbeing of Black engineering students.

4. Make the HSSEAS Website More Accessible to Incoming Black Students

UCLA has lost Black Engineering Graduate Students to other universities, and we are concerned that Black students are not interested in enrolling in UCLA HSSEAS because the school's reputation of not being an inclusive environment that fosters equity in engineering. This is reinforced by the school's [website](#) which does not provide a substantial amount of information on diversity and inclusion commitments within HSSEAS. We demand an addition to the HSSEAS website that is dedicated to informing incoming Black Undergraduate and Graduate Students on available resources for scholarship and funding i.e (Diversity and Inclusion Resources, Programs, Initiatives) because we are not providing incentives for them to come.

response to this letter within one week outlining the school's planned actions which will include:

- How actions will be distributed among *all* faculty and administrators and not excessively pushed on diversity committees or academics from marginalized groups.
- Detailed timelines towards those actions as well as success indicators for these actions
- A commitment to frequent progress updates on these actions in the form of a reoccurring Town Hall series and monthly report.
- A discussion of how HSSEAS will involve students in these action steps.