

Dear Colleagues,

Recent conversations with the incoming and outgoing members of Student Government and Graduate Senate convinced me of the need to send an apology to students for my September 2018 talk at the All Faculty and Staff Meeting.

Having heard their pain, and reflecting on the hurt expressed at the all faculty and staff forum on my talk, I want you to have my apology as well. It should have come much sooner.

Sincerely,

Martin Berger

Dear Students,

Last week, I met with members of Student Government and Graduate Senate to discuss the Change petition that seeks my resignation. We had a frank conversation in which they articulated frustration with my and the School's lack of response to the petition and its underlining concerns. Following our meeting, student leaders requested that I draft a public statement, so that students across the School could hear me directly address the issues they raised.

For those who don't know, in the fall of 2018 I was asked to present a brief talk to faculty and staff on my research as a way of introducing myself as the new dean of faculty. I spoke about my scholarly work on photography and the Black struggle for civil rights. I analyzed a photograph that depicted Black activist Elizabeth Eckford, then a young student, integrating an all-White high school as she was jeered by a racist crowd. In describing her recollections of the day, Eckford used the n-word and I quoted her directly in my talk. My use of the word was a mistake for which I sincerely apologize. I wish I could undo the damage I've caused.

I've listened to faculty and staff who spoke up at the employee open forum organized to address my use of the word and to student leaders who've detailed their concerns to me in our meetings. With these voices in mind, I pledge to learn and grow by continuing my education on the experiences of Black

Americans and other historically marginalized people, with a full understanding that education must be a lifelong project. In my role as provost, I'll redouble efforts to increase our hiring, retention, and promotion of people of color; ensure equity in compensation; and partner with campus stakeholders to advance our campus-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. I vow to continue regular meetings with Student Government and the Graduate Senate, so that I can remain informed of the issues that are important to undergraduate and graduate students and work to meaningfully address your needs. I commit to partnering with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director for Academic Affairs Jefferson Pinder, and the new presidential antiracist advisory committee he leads, to ensure funding and implementation of the structural changes that emerge from their work.

I remain deeply regretful of the pain I caused and sincere in my hope that I can earn community confidence, not by words alone, but through actions that make good on my pledge to help build a diverse, equitable, and inclusive School that nurtures the learning and work of all its members.

Sincerely,

Martin Berger
Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs

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