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Letter - Addressing social justice issues at University of the Pacific

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August 19, 2020

Dear Pacificans,

I hope this communication finds everyone safe, strong and ready to tackle an exciting new academic year at our university. This is not the start any of us imagined as our communities and country continue to battle COVID-19, but I am confident we will have a great — albeit very different — fall semester.

When I wrote to you during my first few days in office in early July, I talked about the imperative to quickly address social justice issues and how the core values of diversity, equity and inclusion are practiced at our university.

I spent my first day in office — 50 days ago — with Black faculty and staff in wide-ranging conversations about the great social injustices and systemic racism that have faced Black Americans across our nation since its founding and how those issues have played out here at Pacific. In the following days and weeks, I have engaged in in-depth conversations — individually and collectively — with Black students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni and Regents as well as other Pacificans of color. While I continue to learn about our university's past and present, the following has become clear: Pacific — like many universities — has made efforts to improve social justice on our campuses. And we — also like many universities — have fallen woefully short.

During our conversations, I have been asked whether we should tackle these issues widely, on a universitywide level, or in a more targeted way, by campus, college and division. My answer is simple: yes. Social justice is core to our values and principles, and therefore we must look for ways to improve our university both horizontally and vertically, within and among all stakeholder groups.

In my inaugural communique, I noted that conversations, committees and platitudes about “doing better” were no longer sufficient. I wrote that we needed action — both immediate and long term. Given that imperative, I would like to announce a series of

new initiatives designed to help improve diversity, equity and inclusion across Pacific. Please know that all of these ideas came from you — our passionate students, inspiring faculty, tireless staff, talented deans and administrators, dedicated Regents and loyal alumni — with the sole goal of making University of the Pacific a better place to live, learn, work and grow. These are just the first of many steps we must take if we want to not only improve our campus climate and culture, but also to emerge as a national leader in higher education and a model antiracist university.

- **Creation of a Cabinet-level Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.** DEI issues are too important — and too far reaching — to be the responsibility of a single person. But I believe having a Cabinet-level executive focused exclusively on these issues is a necessary first step. We will create a committee made up of faculty, staff and students to launch a national search for Pacific's first VPDEI. We do not envision this person operating a large bureaucracy, but rather serving as a thought leader who has responsibility and accountability to help bring together best practices and our existing initiatives to make Pacific a better and more inclusive institution. The VPDEI will be a direct report to the president. Pacific will be one of only two West Coast Conference universities with a vice president for DEI.
- **New Board of Regents Policy on DEI.** The Pacific Board of Regents, under the leadership of new Board Chair Norman Allen ('88, '94), last week voted unanimously to approve a set of new social justice policy initiatives. They include:
 - Launching new efforts to increase diversity in the board's membership.
 - Ensuring that board meetings include opportunities to explore issues of campus inclusion and racial bias at the university.
 - Mandating periodic audits of all university policies and practices that impact diversity, inclusion and racial equity.
 - Overseeing a review of the university's history, policies and practices regarding social justice issues.
 - Directing academic leaders to review and revise curricula associated with social justice on all levels.
- **Appointment of School-Level Directors of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.** Social justice issues manifest themselves in different ways within different disciplines. The approach to social justice issues in international studies may be very different from engineering, in the same way that the approach within music and the arts may differ from dentistry, law or pharmacy. Pacific's schools and colleges will appoint their own school-level DEI leaders. The Dugoni School of Dentistry, the McGeorge School of Law and the School of Engineering and Computer Science have led the way with designated diversity officers already within their schools.
- **Mandatory annual DEI Training for Faculty and Staff.** The Academic Council and the Staff Advisory Council will consider whether Pacific should have mandatory

annual DEI training for faculty and staff. I am mindful of the workload on our employees, but too often such training, when only voluntary, attracts the people who need the training the least and misses the people who need it the most. Mandatory training is worthy of serious consideration given the importance of these issues to our core principles and values.

- **Elimination of Standardized Tests for Undergraduate Admissions.** Research has found that there are socioeconomic and cultural biases embedded within ACT and SAT standardized tests. We have a temporary policy making standardized test scores optional for the next two years. I have asked the provost, the vice president for enrollment management and the Academic Council to explore the permanent elimination of these tests for admission to Pacific.
- **New Protections Against Racial Discrimination.** The university's Policy Prohibiting Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination and Retaliation is designed in part to meet the federal mandate of Title IX, which offers protection against sex- and gender-based discrimination. I am asking Title IX coordinator Elizabeth Trayner, in collaboration with the University Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (UCDEI), to design new policies and procedures that would offer clear and robust protections against racial discrimination, racial harassment and microaggressions at our university.
- **Open Dialogue and Interactive Workshops on Law Enforcement.** University Ombuds Hector Escalante and Dr. Carlton Oler of Counseling and Psychological Services will host a series of interactive workshops designed to bring together the Department of Public Safety with students, faculty and staff to build organizational cultural competence, promote understanding and create an ethos of student care.
- **Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Faculty and Staff.** I have asked Deborah Freeman, director of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity, to report to the Cabinet quarterly on new hires, promotions and employees leaving the university, identified by race. I also will ask her and UCDEI to work together on recommendations on how to improve our recruitment and retention of faculty and staff of color. Furthermore, all managers and supervisors — including deans, vice presidents and me — as part of their annual evaluations will be measured in part on their success in recruiting and retaining diverse faculty and staff.
- **DEI Measures in Annual Evaluations.** I have asked our Office of Human Resources to work with UCDEI to develop a section within the annual employee evaluation instrument to measure various principles and actions related to diversity, equity and inclusion for each Pacific employee, with a focus on best practices.
- **Fundraising Scholarship Campaign for Black Students.** Board of Regents Chair Norman Allen is making a personal contribution to start a campaign to raise funds to help recruit and support more Black students at Pacific. The Office of University Development and Alumni Relations will be working with Chair Allen on the "Lift Every Voice" endowed scholarship initiative. This will be in addition to other Pacific

scholarships for students of color, including support for Black engineering students created by Regent Janet Y. Spears.

- **New DEI Programming for Students.** The Division of Student Life is hosting dozens of new programs and events for students focused on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. They include training and workshops on bias response, cultural humility, microaggressions, intercultural competency, LGBTQ leadership, gender equity, resilience, meditation and faith as well as events to improve the success of Black, Latino, Native American, Asian American and first-generation college students.
- **University Libraries.** University Libraries will conduct a diversity audit of its entire collection to determine gaps in representations of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability and other traditionally marginalized perspectives. The goal is to diversify the collection to ensure that students, faculty and staff can access materials that reflect the diversity of experiences and perspectives of our communities. In the meantime, Pacificans can access [Resources on Bias and Racism in America](#), which highlights some of the racial justice and DEI-related titles in our collection.
- **University Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.** This committee, which includes faculty, staff and students, will be at the center of new DEI initiatives, exploring longer term strategies to improve social justice at Pacific. I will meet with UCDEI each month. The Council of Deans also has asked for regular meetings with UCDEI to explore and coordinate new ideas and initiatives. UCDEI is championing a new weekly series focused on social justice issues and creating a #LetsTalkTuesday social media campaign. The committee can be followed on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

In addition to these universitywide initiatives, there are a series of actions taken by other leadership units within the Pacific community. They include:

- **ASuop.** The student government, led by new President Randi Holguin, created a Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within the Associated Students of University of the Pacific. The new department is designed to bridge the gap between student groups from under-represented and non-traditional backgrounds to the university and to advocate for those student populations. Additionally, the ASuop Senate Cultural Competency Committee is conducting focus group research with students, faculty and staff. And President Holguin will serve on the University Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- **Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry.** The Dugoni School, which already has an assistant dean for admissions, student affairs and diversity, is adding a new position of diversity and outreach manager. Additionally, the school is hosting unconscious bias training for faculty, a series of DEI-themed educational programming, a new Instagram account focused on diversity at Dugoni, an internal promotional campaign

on DEI issues and a new fundraising push for scholarships to support students of color.

- **Benerd College.** Benerd College will host a series of facilitated workshops focusing on DEI issues and design a spring symposium on “Reimagining Policing.”
- **College of the Pacific.** The College will convene Black students to explore their experiences at COP, with the intent of developing department-level action plans to address concerns.
- **Conservatory of Music.** The conservatory has brought to the university Philip Ewell, a Hunter College music theory professor who studies the intersection of music and race, as a visiting scholar in residence to explore how to combat racism and sexism in music. The conservatory also is taking new intentional efforts to include the works of Black, Indigenous and other people of color in the repertoires studied as well as improving the hiring of diverse faculty and staff.
- **Eberhardt School of Business.** The Eberhardt School is creating a new course, “Race and Ethnicity in Business,” and launching a new mentoring program for students of color.
- **Graduate School.** The Graduate School expanded its diversity recruitment, focusing on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions and undergraduate students of color at Pacific. The school also is expanding its partnership with the California Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education and is conducting an audit of graduate assistantships to enhance equity.
- **McGeorge School of Law.** McGeorge, which already established an associate dean for diversity position, also supports student diversity trainings as part of both orientation and a required class. In addition, McGeorge established a Diversity Affairs Committee and the Center for Inclusion and Diversity. McGeorge also is conducting a diversity audit to explore all dimensions of DEI issues at the school and has contracted for multiple DEI training programs and speakers, including sessions in implicit bias, stereotype threat and racial and gender issues in legal academia. Additionally, the dean has made diversity and inclusion initiatives the centerpiece of the law school’s fundraising efforts.
- **School of Engineering and Computer Science.** SOECS is working to expand its 2-year-old Office of Diversity and Inclusion, which works with middle school and high school students from underserved schools in Stockton. The school also has guaranteed pathways from San Joaquin Delta College and financially supports low-income students recruited to SOECS through a peer mentoring program.
- **School of Health Sciences.** Pacific’s newest school is creating a DEI Committee to work across departments to focus on increasing diversity hiring efforts for faculty and staff. The school also is designing new recruitment strategies to increase student diversity.
- **Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy.** Pharmacy is conducting town halls to receive feedback from students, alumni, faculty and staff on DEI issues and offering cultural

sensitivity training for students. The school also is reviewing its core curriculum to focus on DEI topics.

- **Pacific Athletics.** Pacific was a vocal supporter of a groundbreaking new policy established by the West Coast Conference earlier this month — the first diversity hiring commitment in NCAA Division I athletics. The “Russell Rule,” named after social justice advocate and NBA and WCC star Bill Russell, requires the 10 WCC schools to have at least one member of an underrepresented community in the pool of finalists for all athletic director, senior administrator, head coach and full-time assistant head coach searches.

Please know that all these efforts are just a beginning as we strive to become a model antiracist university and a national leader on diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education. I am thankful to the many Pacific students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni and Regents who contributed their time, thoughts, ideas and experiences. Through my first 50 days of listening and engagement, I have been moved by the passion and energy around social justice issues across the university and the desire to make Pacific a better, more inclusive university. Now it’s time to get to work, together.

Sincerely,

Christopher Callahan
President