

March 29, 2021

TO: UMD Department of Mathematics and Statistics

FROM: Lendley C. Black, Chancellor

Fernando C. Delgado, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic
Affairs Wendy Reed, Dean, Swenson College of Science and
Engineering

RE: Working together on culture and community

Dear Colleagues,

Our culture, how we work and engage with each other, creates not just the context for an effective workplace, but as we all know, forms the very reason that our students want to attend, learn, and grow with us. Our academic rigor complements, but can never supplant, the culture that creates the respect and collegiality that we all desire in our workplace.

In 2019, our office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) completed an investigation related to complaints in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. The EOAA investigation report concluded that, “the gendered attitudes and practices described in this letter have contributed to an environment in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics that several women have found, and that a reasonable woman would find, to be hostile or offensive, in violation of University policy.” You can be assured that Chancellor Black, EVCAA Delgado, and SCSE Dean Reed, took this investigation and its findings very seriously. We have made very clear our positions that a culture that detracts from our positive working relationship, and the service we perform for our students and this state, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

With the help of colleagues across the University, including external consultants, Dean Reed, working through the department head, has made multiple positive changes. These include:

- The department constitution that codified power differentials has been removed, providing more agency to term faculty in the department.
- A new rubric for merit reviews, that was developed and proposed by a group of

term and tenure-line faculty in the department, was accepted and implemented starting Spring 2020.

- Collegiate department heads are participating in the University of Illinois leadership training "Academic Leadership for Challenging Times" to gain tools needed to address department climate issues.
- In Fall 2019, the college hosted a team of trainers to learn about how men can be allies and advocates for gender equity in the college. The trainers will return to the college in Fall 2021 to help establish an Allies and Advocate program in SCSE. This program will include an advisory committee focused on gender equity in SCSE.
- The college commissioned an audit in December 2019, which led to a framework for addressing climate and work towards gender equity goals in the college. The framework includes addressing policies and procedures, increasing support networks, using data to inform and benchmark, and providing training and education. The college uses this framework to set annual goals and to guide equity work.
- The college sponsored two faculty to attend a training workshop to bring bystander intervention training to the college. This led to establishing a SCSE Climate Team for trainers and the workshop has now been offered to multiple departments, undergraduate and graduate students, and collegiate leadership.
- The college's DEI unit change team is charged with reading and working through the workbook: *Fix your climate: A practical guide to reducing microaggressions, microbullying, and bullying in the academic workplace* by Myron R. Anderson and Kathryn S. Young. They are designing a 3-5 year plan for this work in the college, which includes drafting a SCSE code of conduct for faculty and staff.

In addition, the University understands that restorative practice, to both promote a positive culture and to redress past wrongs, is a powerful tool for healing. Dean Reed has selected an outside consultant who will begin meeting monthly with the Department of Mathematics and Statistics department this spring and throughout the coming academic year.

We acknowledge and accept that transparency and communications around our responses may not have been as clear and consistent as faculty, students, and staff in the department and college may have wanted. With this in mind, we have been consulting with the system Office of Equity and Diversity since 2019, and we are now coordinating with them and the President's Office to help facilitate listening sessions with the department beginning in April. The purpose of these listening sessions is to hear your concerns and questions, answer questions to the extent that state and federal laws allow, and gather your feedback and ideas on additional efforts moving forward. We hear that for some of you confidence in the University has been shaken. We

reassure you of the important steps we have taken and those that we are taking to improve the climate within the department and college, and ensure that if misconduct occurs those responsible are held accountable.

We know that we must build a common understanding around these important issues. The recently updated PIPSM training module has been expanded to cover discrimination and harassment relating to bias and employees and student workers will be required to complete this engaging and challenging training in the next few weeks.

We offer this information not simply as an update. No update can solve the pain associated with bias in the workplace. But we can tell you that you have our commitment to engage with you and assure you that your voices have been heard.

If you believe that you are experiencing bias in any form, do not hesitate to report it immediately to the [Campus Climate team](#) immediately. For your wellbeing, please note the following resources that students and staff can access as you may need. • [Student Mental Health](#)

- [Staff and Faculty Mental Health](#)

We understand that wrongs cannot be righted in ways that all will find acceptable. Our culture cannot be changed quickly, nor can the progress we have made to date be seen as “solving” an issue. We are committed to working with you, day in and day out, to seek prevention, transparency, and justice that makes our community stronger together.

We thank you for your advocacy and your engagement.