

## College of Arts and Sciences Statement of Commitment to Racial Justice and Equity

The College of Arts and Sciences holds the following to be unequivocally true: Black Lives Matter. The unbearably long line of Black lives lost to blue violence in recent history, such as George Floyd, Sandra Bland, and Tamir Rice, as well as those lost to blue sanctioned violence in the more distant past, such as Emmett Till, Carol Denise McNair, and Dick Rowland, have ignited an empathic firestorm among people from all races and ethnicities. These allies have also unequivocally declared that Black Lives Matter. We acknowledge that embracing the statement Black Lives Matter does not and must not mean the abandonment of the many voices also seeking release from backbreaking injustices. Therefore, as a College, we commit ourselves to adopting anti-racist practices that result in a life-affirming and inclusive culture where all people thrive on campus and in the surrounding local community.

We stand with the University in our heartbreak and outrage over the killing of Black men, women, girls, boys, trans and nonbinary people at the hands of law enforcement and legal officials. These atrocities bring to light the racial injustice and institutional racism faced by the Black communities of our nation previously concealed by privilege. In the College of Arts and Sciences, we are called to deploy the critical thinking, problem solving, and empathy that lie at the heart of liberal arts education in pursuit of racial justice and equity.

With this statement, an act of making our commitments visible, we again affirm that Black Lives Matter and that the pursuit of an antiracist agenda and racial justice are our collective responsibility. We further affirm the need to center the lived experience of Black members of our community. Together, we voice a desire to learn and grow, and we acknowledge the importance of humility, openness to critique, and a willingness to admit our errors and mistakes as they occur. We know that good intentions do not absolve us of accountability. Our responsibilities will evolve and deepen as we constantly seek to improve.

Acknowledging and building on the statements and plans created by departments and programs, the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will work to operationalize and amplify the commitments of departments, programs, and other areas within the College. In pursuit of racial justice and equity at and beyond Stetson University, the College of Arts and Sciences will:

- Model inclusive faculty and staff hiring practices at every stage of the process, intensively recruiting, retaining, and mentoring Black faculty and faculty from other marginalized or underrepresented identities to ensure successful progress through tenure and promotion processes and provide support for contingent faculty. We pledge to be University leaders in implementing the recommendations described in “Stetson University Guidelines for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Search, Selection, Hiring, Onboarding, and Retention”; to align our approaches with national best practices; and to pursue connections to organizations such as the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity.
- Work with campus partners to retain and mentor our Black students and those from other marginalized or underrepresented identities. We will examine existing sources such as the Black Senior Student survey data and will partner with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness to design, implement, and analyze new assessment tools that will help us to better understand our students’ experiences and develop concrete steps for action.
- Challenge all our students to learn and grow in an inclusive community of ideas. To that end, we will foster conversations about an inclusive curriculum that addresses equity and social justice

issues, working in concert with the College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee and other groups.

- Center Black scholarship, teaching, community, and civic engagement in the Africana Studies Program as a permanent institutional home at Stetson. Work to increase funding to the Africana Studies Program to ensure its permanence, stability and growth, and consider establishing Africana Studies as an academic department.
- Commit to a deeper and more complex understanding of race and racism in the United States, in higher education, and in our academic units.
- Collaborate with Africana Studies, the Brown Center for Faculty Innovation and Excellence, and other campus partners to expand our commitment to anti-racist and inclusive pedagogy and assessment, acknowledging that faculty development is relevant across faculty ranks and roles.
- Explore Africana Studies and Public History as possible bridges to expanding community partnerships. We will pursue opportunities for collaboration with Bethune-Cookman University and strengthen our connections to local grassroots organizations such as Volusia Remembers. In partnership with the University Archives and other stakeholders, we will consider how understanding the history of Stetson University may help us to chart the institution's future course.
- Amplify, support, and contribute resources to department- level programming focused on Black voices and underrepresented, understudied, or marginalized groups and perspectives. We will gather information about these events to understand how we are making progress toward our goals.
- Utilize climate surveys, personal narratives, and data in other forms to craft meaningful action steps and change.
- Continue to implement transparent and collaborative practices in order to create an environment of respect and inclusivity when we gather, discuss, and make decisions. We will examine and remediate practices and structures that contribute to imbalances and inequities in power. We will seek to listen and understand, not to assume.

Signed,

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