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University of Missouri

Dear Students, Faculty, Staff and Alumni,

Over the last several days, we have seen an outpouring of support for those who have faced racism, both in our community and throughout the country.

University leaders and I have sent notes in recent days voicing our sorrow over the recent injustices and tragic deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. We have vowed to do more as we have met with numerous black students, staff and faculty who have described the immense toll that systemic discrimination and racism has taken on their confidence in justice, on their mental health and on their hope that true change will ever happen.

We have been watching closely the social media thread #BlackatMizzou on Twitter and Instagram since it began earlier this week and are listening to powerful testimonies from our previous and current students featured there. I can tell you my heart has been rocked by this experience as have many others, and those who shared these posts should know their experiences are valued and have not been ignored.

Each tweet is a sobering reminder of the ugliness many of you have faced. I have been discussing these comments with our deans, faculty and university leaders, and we are learning from the common themes shared while also looking into some specific cases mentioned. These stories of name calling, racist assumptions and lack of response to injustice illustrate to me that our work is far from done related to inclusion, diversity and equity. I wish I could have been there each time these incidents occurred to call out the perpetrators, to hold them accountable and to support those who've been affected. But, that's not possible. So, I call upon each one of us to take the stand to confront discrimination when it happens and to provide care and compassion to those who have suffered from it.

Mizzou continues to be committed to creating an inclusive community where everyone can live, learn and work in an environment that supports and celebrates each individual. I am grateful to our many students, faculty and staff who have worked tirelessly for change at Mizzou. I assure you that we will not stop pressing, and we will strive to spread the responsibility from those who have shouldered the brunt of the work to the larger community. Over the last several years we have done a lot of planning and created some progress and action. We all must do more.

Our community must address this important work together. Some are asking for details of our progress in recent years. To that end, we are organizing community conversations soon to discuss what we have been doing and how we can build on that foundation for a better Mizzou. We will share details in the coming weeks.

On behalf of the faculty, department chairs, deans, provost and the staff, I confirm that we will take important positive actions.

We know our Tiger family will lead change.

Mun Y. Choi, Ph.D.

UM System President and interim MU Chancellor

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