
Response to Students and Community - Juneteenth Letter

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Dear Students and Physics Community At Large,

First, a sincere thanks to the students for the time they have taken, and the dedication they have shown, in their devotion to strengthening our department's culture and inclusivity. We are joining you in a call for action, this moment demands it, and with you we are actively engaged in seeking solutions to the issues you have highlighted, and which we can plainly see need our collective attention.

The #Strike4BlackLives was an important event for physics as a field, and for Berkeley specifically, since it offered us the opportunity to take a serious look at ourselves, at our history and at the inequities that need dismantling. It is our sincere hope to harness the enthusiasm and dedication that our community has shown through its many conversations and gatherings over the last few weeks, to reach for a different future for this department - one that welcomes, engages, and supports our entire community, and launches a diverse array of physicists into the field. All facets of our community have been involved in these conversations: students, faculty, postdocs, and staff, and members of each of these groups have advanced ideas and solutions they would like us to consider.

The many ideas set forth by the students in their June 19th letter, have resonance with the overall direction we all, collectively, must take. We need to discard what's not working, and build on what has worked. We don't know all the answers, so we are listening to all of you and the ideas you raise.

We have charged the E&I committee, on which student representatives sit, to clarify which ideas we can undertake quickly and are within reach, and to determine their resource requirements. We are asking the committee to make recommendations for initiatives that may need more time, or campus support, in seeing through. They will meet July 1st, in a special meeting, to take up this charge. You can expect to hear regular updates on our progress, and you will hear from us as we will need your help to carry these ideas out.

Take note that the Graduate Diversity Task Force has recently delivered their preliminary recommendations to the campus administration and we are very interested in the guidance that document offers. The task force's next step is to develop an implementation plan which will include funding and suggestions for aligning resources in these efforts. Help from the Graduate Division will allow us to leverage our plans for expanding pathways for physics URM students, provide summer research opportunities, and expand recruitment networks within the Cal State University and University of California systems, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and other minority-serving institutions.

Here is a quick preview of what we're currently working on:

- We've met with the SEED Scholars Director Ira Young to discuss how to leverage his efforts to strengthen pathways for high school students interested in physics to Berkeley and into research and academia. While our involvement with SEED is not new, expanded efforts to partner with SEED offers us the ability to focus our efforts on not just increasing numbers of students-of-color into the Physics Major, but also improving the experience for all physics students of color once they're here.
- Discussions are underway for a research resource fair in August for undergraduates pursuing research opportunities and to solidify opportunities to compensate them for their work. We're

exploring opportunities to utilize workstudy as one way to do this. We need to open more opportunities for summer research through URAP and SURF particularly, and the resource fair offers us the chance to communicate about deadlines and broker conversations between students and faculty and postdocs to facilitate matching.

- We're exploring whether to invest more time into programs like [CAMPARE](#) with [CalBridge](#). These programs provide mentorship and research opportunities to CSU students. CSU students are yet another population of rich talent we should be supporting and drawing from in admissions.
- We are exploring ways to provide additional resources to transfer student programs to soften their landing and encourage their integration into the department. This should include ways to expand research opportunities for them. Our Physics Frontier Center proposal was recently approved by NSF and should provide needed funding for this effort.
- We're compiling a list of microaggressions along with a set of community principles for our department. We plan to have discussions at faculty meetings addressing specific incidents that have occurred as well as best practices to have a welcoming environment where a diverse student body will all feel respected and welcome. The E&I committee will partner with the Respect is Part of Research to develop training for faculty. It is a department expectation that all our faculty to be engaged with our diverse student body.
- We are evaluating resources available on our website on an ongoing basis these past weeks. We've added links to our E&I page, and are considering more resources we should be posting. These must take into account that our website is in need of a refresh and upgrade overall. There is much more work to be done here.
- We support maintaining focus on providing a diverse array of speakers for our colloquia. We would like to add a grad student member of our nomination committee who can help us reach that goal. We will also open up a nomination process so that students can nominate speakers they would like to invite. The idea has been raised that we might ask the colloquium committee to add a colloquium on BLM issues this Fall with a high profile speaker.
- We are evaluating what financial resources we can devote to student travel, intentional recruitment activities and URM events. We've begun a new fund for this purpose, started for a matching gift challenge that took place on Juneteenth. That fund is at \$15,000 so far. We intend to continue this fundraising effort. The SEED Scholars program has a network of undergraduates across the country we could be tapping, and there may be funding from them to send our students and faculty to recruitment events.
- Improper police practices affect the climate of our city and campus, and they threaten our ability to welcome black individuals into our community. So getting policing policies right is a community concern. We encourage individuals to get involved on this issue. We will continue to discuss whether it is appropriate for the department to take a policy stand on this issue.
- A town hall to report back on our climate survey is in the works for early Fall Semester.
- E&I training should be an annual practice for all members of our community. We have partnered with PATH to Care on educational resources and a new flyer campaign to be launched when we reopen in Fall. We plan to investigate training programs that are successful and consider how best to implement such a program for this coming academic year. We've gotten the suggestion to bring back the popular "Identity Matters" training that has been hosted in the past.
- Regular discussions for faculty and staff on anti-racism continue. We're actively working to organize more of these discussion groups so as many people who wish to participate, can.
- With Grad Division's help, we plan to update our list of admissions principles and practices that center academic excellence, value underrepresented perspectives, affirm a commitment to providing equitable access and funding, and that establish an inclusive foundation for the future of physics.

We realize that these actions we've taken, and are exploring, are not all precisely on point with the demands in your letter, but the list offers you a snapshot of what is in progress. We've gotten it wrong in the past, or our best efforts have just not been enough. We won't get it right the first time now either, but this is the start. We need enduring change. And we need all of us involved in the solutions and the implementation. As we embark on this effort, we'll be stronger if we do it together. We look forward to partnering with you all.

Wick Haxton, Chair

Jonathan Wurtele, Vice Chair

Roia Ferrares, Director

Ori Ganor, Equity Advisor