

July 1, 2020

FROM: Alumni of LMU's Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice

TO: Michelle Young Ph.D., Dean of LMU School of Education

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Dear Dr. Young,

The murder of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and subsequent events throughout our country have affected us all. Our Black families, communities, friends, colleagues, and students are exhausted, heartbroken, and outraged; not only due to this tragedy, but due to the institutionalized racism that persists in all aspects of our society.

In an attempt to respond to these events, Dr. Jill Bickett, former Director for the Doctorate in Educational Leadership for Social Justice program, sent an email on June 3rd to alumni that, while well-intended, was deemed as being insulting, insensitive, and hurtful to several of the recipients. In an effort to address concerns to the first email, a subsequent email was sent on June 5th and a forum created on June 7th to engage current students, alumni, and incoming students in a virtual conversation to provide an opportunity for dialogue.

A number of alumni, current students, and incoming students met informally the afternoon of June 7th to share thoughts on their reactions to the email and to join in solidarity. Topics included:

- The inability of the faculty, staff, and leadership of the School of Education and Doctoral Program to adequately communicate the values and ideals of social justice educators.
- Concerns that have been shared repeatedly in the past but without any action, including:

- The lack of Black adjuncts, tenure track, and tenured faculty as well as the lack of other faculty of color that reflect the lived experiences of the greater Los Angeles community, or the community at large.
- A robust curriculum that affirms the wisdom and contribution of people of color to educational justice and social movements in this country and globally.
- The tone-deaf messaging of the original email from June 3, 2020, viewed as a symptom of larger systemic issues within the School of Education and the university as a whole.
- The lack of avenues for two-way engagement with alumni which include the disbanding of the Doctoral Alumni Board.
- The disparities in the ways that students of color, and in particular Black students, receive funding for conferences and tuition assistance from the SOE.
- Negative experiences in the Doctoral Program shared by several Black alumni such as the lack of access to nationwide doctoral student organizations, academic support, and access to Black faculty to serve on their dissertation committees.
- The lack of transparent demographic data on Doctoral Program student recruitment, application, and acceptance.

As a way to move forward, we propose the following:

Short Term (1-3 months)

- A more detailed follow-up response from Dr. Karie Huchting's June 12th email to alumni which includes a tentative plan on how the Doctoral Program plans to address the issues discussed.
- Any subsequent scheduled forums surrounding the ongoing diversity and inclusion work must have clear objectives and action items that are also vetted by a diverse group of faculty and alumni.
- **The reinstatement of the doctoral-specific alumni board with clear guidelines for the selection process, term of membership, and duties for council members. This board should also include at least one ex officio member on the School of Education Alumni Association Board.**
- An audit of the current doctoral curriculum including syllabi, texts, and projects in an effort to make adjustments as needed for Fall Semester 2020.
- A discussion with you, the current SOE Dean, about key issues, action items, and a collective commitment to supporting and holding the Doctoral Program accountable for measurable changes.
- **Demographic data be compiled and provided for review for the past five years on the student applicants and students accepted into the Doctoral Program.**

Long-Term (3-6 months)

- A commitment from current faculty and leadership to complete internal work on issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice including but not limited to: Critical Race Theory, white supremacy, white fragility, restorative justice, and antiracism.
- **A review of current policies and practices that contribute to the lack of Black faculty and a plan with measurable outcomes to increase Black adjunct and tenure-track faculty.**
- An internal and external search to add at least two Black faculty members prior to the start of the Spring 2021 semester.
 - Include members of the Doctoral Alumni Board and select alumni in the hiring and selection process.
 - Engage the Doctoral Alumni Board on how to address broader issues of racial diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Doctoral Program.
 - In the current absence of Black faculty, a temporary option that addresses student concerns is to utilize the current alumni as guest lecturers within specific classes in the doctoral program.
- Based on the student recruitment, applications, and acceptance demographic data, examine and adjust current LMU School of Education and Doctoral Program recruitment and application procedures and requirements that may be perpetuating biases and institutional racism. This process should be led by a committee of faculty, alumni, and current students.

The above action items would be a start on the road to ensuring that LMU’s School of Education truly embodies its mission and vision statement. We believe that the Doctoral Program can and should lead the charge to make sustainable changes regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion within the university, the City of Los Angeles, and beyond. We implore the Doctoral Program to embody the mission and vision statement of Loyola Marymount University to “...invite men and women diverse in talents, interests, and cultural backgrounds to enrich our educational community and advance our mission:

- The encouragement of learning
- The education of the whole person
- The service of faith and the promotion of justice”

We are looking forward to hearing from you regarding how you will address our concerns, charting a path forward by August 1, 2020. As LMU Doctoral alumni, we stand ready to support your transition, your leadership, and to work alongside you to fulfill LMU SOE’s mission and vision. Please contact Dr. Dana Coleman and Dr. Carla McCullough with your response. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

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Manny A. Aceves, Ed.D.

Daniel Alamo, Ed.D.

Maria D.S. Andrade Johnson, Ed.D.

Angelica Bailon, Ed.D.

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CC: Timothy Law Snyder, Ph.D., President

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David Sapp, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of Graduate Education

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Vicki Graf, Ph.D., Interim Chair, Department of Teaching and Learning

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