

From: [LCOM Office of the Dean](#)
To: [Gilwee, Vicki M](#)
Subject: Message from Dean Rick Page - Juneteenth
Date: Friday, June 19, 2020 1:09:24 PM

Dear Larner Community,

Today we commemorate [Juneteenth](#), the day in 1865 when those who were enslaved in Texas were informed of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (issued two-and-a-half years prior). Our acknowledgment of this important day is especially relevant now, as our nation grapples with our long history of racism in the setting of recent horrific examples of police violence toward Black citizens. These events, occurring in the backdrop of a global pandemic that disproportionately is afflicting Black and Latinx citizens, has appropriately, and finally, opened the eyes of many, leading them to find their voice in condemning all forms of racism in our society.

But the issues of social justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, are longstanding, and our outrage must translate to constructive actions that will ensure change in our community and throughout the world. In the time since my last letter, following the murder of George Floyd, I have wrestled with what concrete steps our College can take. Among my most valuable discussions was a meeting last week with medical student members of the Social Justice Coalition, Student National Medical Association, Latino Medical Student Association, Gender and Sexuality Alliance, and the Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association. These quarterly meetings complement the ongoing efforts by our Office of Diversity and Inclusion, led by Dean Margaret Tandoh, and efforts by the Office of Medical Student Education, led by Dean Christa Zehle. We must also coordinate with our graduate and post-doctoral programs, led by Deans Chris Berger and Gordon Jensen. Rather than attempting to immediately put forward a comprehensive plan to address the issue of systemic racism, I want to share with you that I commit, on the behalf of the Larner College of Medicine, to ensure issues of social justice, equity, diversity and inclusion shall be at the forefront of everything we do. To develop our plan, we need to first listen and learn. I anticipate that we will host Town Halls and other more focused opportunities to hear from our community as we address these important issues, with the intention to turn talk into action.

As we start, with the support of Dean Tandoh, we are renaming the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) to the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI). I see the important statement, Black Lives Matter, as an issue of equity. I will be working with Dean Tandoh and the ODEI staff to identify how we can better provide resources for this office. Further guidance for this, and other future action, will emanate from a newly reconfigured and resourced Dean's Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DACDI, now re-named DACDEI).

As we move forward, we as a community must share a common understanding of systemic racism, and the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in all we do. It's fortuitous that earlier this year we purchased the EVERFI Diversity eLearning Suite. This high-quality, evidence-based program, which forms the foundation of the [Finding Our Common Ground Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) curriculum, contains learning resources for all faculty, staff and students that address systemic racism, bias, bystander training, and strategies for building equity into our organization. The curriculum, enhanced by small group experiences and customizable for our needs, is already

planned for our incoming MD class of 2024, and is to be rolled out broadly throughout the Larner community this summer. It is now clear that we must work toward universal expectation of this curriculum for all Larner students, staff and faculty. We will also work to align our efforts to those of the UVM Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the UVM Medical Center.

In closing, on this important day I write to you in the context of humility, as I grapple to better understand the shameful inequity, injustice and racism that confront the lives of Black, Indigenous and people of color in America. We must promote an environment that makes everyone in our community—students, staff and faculty—feel valued, supported and safe. Our professionalism statement emphasizes cultural humility, kindness and respect characterizing our daily interactions. We must embrace this aspiration and live it every day.

Stay well,
Rick

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