

**Subject: A Message of Response to RSPH Student Demands**

Tuesday, July 7, 2020

To the Rollins Association of Black Public Health Students, Students for Social Justice, Rollins Student Government Association, supporters, and advocates.

World events of the past few months have re-surfaced the urgent need to call out and act against racism in its many forms. Historically, students and marginalized groups have too often been burdened with the responsibility of leading change. We thank you, RSPH students, staff, faculty, and alumni, for re-igniting the charge to actively work against racism within and beyond the Rollins community. And we recognize your vulnerability and courage in sharing your experiences.

Past progress has fallen short due in part because we have failed to acknowledge White supremacy at Rollins and the ways some have benefited from systems of oppression over others. We humbly admit that we are belated in efforts and actions needed to ensure Rollins is a safe, equitable, and inclusive community and culture for all.

We commit to real, sustainable, and collaborative changes in our policies, practices, and pedagogical approach. The needed changes around diversity, equity, and inclusion must occur within all levels and groups across the school – from the Dean’s Office to departments and service units, and inclusive of faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Front and center to these efforts is the search for an Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, for which we have convened a selection committee of students, staff, and faculty. Beginning early Fall, this person will be responsible for overseeing school-wide efforts to increase diversity and equity of faculty, staff, and students; and leading Rollins in building its culture of inclusivity. We want to be clear that this person will not absolve anyone from the necessary work to ensure Rollins is a community of belonging for all. Rather, this person will lead strategic planning and structural changes at multiple levels of our institution. Additionally, the Office of Admissions and Student Services’ Assistant Director of Community Engaged Learning and Cultural Humility, Shannon Vassell, will work closely with the new Assistant Dean to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion for students and student groups.

In response to and in collaboration with you, we have identified areas where progress is needed and have mapped your demands within each category. Attached to this message, please find an addendum that details each of the demands. These areas commit us to the necessary work that must begin immediately, and also set an agenda for the incoming Assistant Dean.

- Affirming Black Voices & Experiences Within and Beyond the Classroom (Demands 3 and 10)
- Faculty Recruitment & Development (Demands 8, 9, and 11)
- Student Engagement & Orientation (Demands 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 13, and 14)
- Admissions Practices & Scholarship Allocation (Demand 7)
- Transparency of School Demographic Data (Demand 12)

In line with this agenda, we have made commitments to addressing the current need. These steps are only some of our ongoing efforts to foster a more equitable Rollins community and culture.

- Meeting regularly with school and department leadership to discuss anti-racism efforts.

- The RSPH Education Committee has formed a subcommittee to discuss anti-racism curricula.
- Requiring Cultural Humility training for all incoming master's and doctoral students.
- Creating the Common Read book list, with accompanying author talks/discussion groups, for incoming students, consisting of:
  - o *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Rebecca Skloot
  - o *From Enforcers to Guardians: A Public Health Primer on Ending Police Violence*, Dr. Hannah L. F. Cooper and Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove
  - o *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy*, Dr. Carol Anderson
- Planning July listening sessions for student feedback and reflection on race, diversity, equity, and inclusion at Rollins.
- Sharing with student leaders' legal resources for students participating in the Black Lives Matter protests.
- Providing support for personal protective equipment (PPE) distribution for participants in the Black Lives Matter protests.

We appreciate any collaboration you may offer as we implement these and other changes. At the same time, we fully embrace our responsibility as school leaders to actively and publicly work against racism at and beyond Rollins. We are committed to sustainable, strategic, and thoughtful changes for our entire institution, including students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community stakeholders.

Thank you again for re-igniting Rollins's commitment to anti-racism work within and beyond our school.

Sincerely,



James W. Curran, MD, MPH  
James W. Curran Dean of Public Health

