



June 16, 2020

Dear UAPB Family,

I hope all is well, and you and your families are staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. As our nation mourns the deaths of more than a 100,000 fellow citizens due to coronavirus, we also find ourselves in the midst of worldwide protests for justice and equality. The ongoing protests began when we all witnessed through a camera lens the brutality of a Minneapolis police officer kneeling on George Floyd's neck for more than 8 minutes. He and three of his fellow officers were charged in Floyd's death. Our nation of laws requires justice in this case and in so many others. If our nation remains true to the proclamation in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal and the 14th Amendment guarantee of equal protection of the law for all, then the value placed on the lives of black people should equal that of all others who live in this country.

Such outrageous police behavior is cause for us all to lift our voices in peaceful non-violent protest, which is our constitutional right and which ultimately will be most effective. In addition, let us continue demanding justice in unison with people of all races and backgrounds. If we start with individuals like you and me engaging individuals of a different race using empathy, understanding, and love, we can emerge an even stronger nation. Together, we are UAPB—United Against Police Brutality.

Our university, which was established in 1873 for African Americans during post-slavery reconstruction, has stood for 147 years as a higher education lyceum for people regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or economic status. The education provided here has been a vehicle for upward social mobility, and the university has stood as a beacon of hope in combatting the inequities of racial segregation, Jim Crow laws, and policies and practices that are racially discriminatory. While the alumni have risen individually in their business or profession, the city, state, nation, and world have profited from the collective contributions of the university and its graduates.

We deplore the senseless killing of Mr. Floyd and so many other African Americans who have died during encounters with police. While we watch and wait for justice in all of those cases, we strongly encourage criminal justice system reform, including ongoing checks on police hiring, training, deployment and discipline for the betterment of our communities.



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Some of the difficulty in addressing charges of racism in policing arise out of our nation's history of inadequately addressing the badges and incidents of slavery to eradicate inequality across society in education, employment, and income. We hold fast to the hope that the public and private sector in our state will seize this moment as an inflection point to self-assess attitudes, policies, and practices to determine how they can contribute to the resolution of the problems of racial injustice, inequality and lack of opportunity.

UAPB stands ready to work in partnership with the federal and state government, the private sector, foundations, and our local community to implement not just a new deal but a better deal for underrepresented minorities to assure that we achieve equality in our city, state and nation. Such investments in UAPB would pay huge dividends. A longtime powerful engine of upward mobility, UAPB is uniquely suited to lead the conversation on racial disparities in ways that would give rise to broader understanding and substantive change. Let's seize the moment.

Sincerely,

Laurence B. Alexander, J.D., Ph.D.
Chancellor