

# UCI Department of Physics & Astronomy Action Plan in Support of our Black Community

## Preamble

We stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and our Black community. The recent tragic examples of anti-Black racism highlight how deeply institutional racism can run, and necessitates an introspective look at our own practices. We can and will do better, and we are committed to meaningful change. This community action plan represents the first major reform to be taken in the Department of Physics & Astronomy at UCI, in hopes of pushing towards greater equity, representation, and accountability. This plan was the result of community input at our town hall, with a group of students and postdocs known as Luchadorx providing numerous suggestions. This plan will evolve with time and experience. It is fully consistent with [UCI's overarching principle of Inclusive Excellence](#) and [Regent's Policy 4400](#).

## Structure of Plan

The community action plan consists of three components, addressing various aspects of anti-Black racism in areas across the Department. The categories are: Addressing systemic and Institutionalized Racism, engaging in stronger support for our Black community, and increasing Black representation in Physics & Astronomy research. The goal is to place the workload across our entire community and not to place the burden on any single demographic. The following goals are the initial commitments of the Department, which will be implemented in the 2020-21 Academic year. This plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

## Engage in stronger support for our Black community

The Department will engage in stronger support for our Black community by:

- Broader representation in our communications where we will feature Black and URM scholars and researchers. We will have assessments of representation in social media, press releases, award nominations, merits, etc.
- Host activities celebrating and showcasing physics & astronomy with regards to diversity focused themes. This will include participating in celebratory months such as Black History Month.
- Advertise and sponsor community members to participate at diversity focused conferences such as the National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP), Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), and National Society of Hispanic Physicists (NSHP). Will also advertise funding opportunities from

campus partners such as Grad Division to attend said conferences for recruiting and engagement opportunities.

- Engage with UCI Cross Cultural Center to co-sponsor events with Black Student Union and other student organizations.
- Leverage fundraising events such as UCIGivingDay for Black and other diversity focused scholarships and fellowships.
- Provide funding for peer mentoring activities such as Resonance and PACE.
- Expanding our efforts for first-year and transfer students to provide panels and workshops showcasing available career paths, research programs, fellowships, and internships.
- Develop interventional advising and mentoring approaches for populations which have higher dropout rates or migration out of the major rates than the majority.

### Address systemic and institutionalized racism

The Department will address systemic and institutionalized racism by:

- Providing annual training in student and postdoc orientations, as well as faculty and staff annual retreats. Training will be on micro/macroaggressions, cultural sensitivity, implicit bias, and bystander intervention training.
- Expand current exit surveys to include all community members. We will identify new means of incentivizing completion.
- Reform teaching assistant (TA) training in consultation with the Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation (DTEI).
- We will no longer require any GRE exam for graduate applications, starting Fall 2020. This expands upon the fact that we already do not require the Physics subject GRE.
- Identify biases in our courses and in major completion rates. Form a committee to develop corrective action for instructors and student affairs advisors.
- Identify biases in our admissions processes. Request that the admissions committee develop a corrective action plan.
- Identify opportunities for faculty to develop inclusive practices and advertise this success. For example, highlight courses in which faculty have completed the DTEI course design workshop, which emphasizes inclusive course design highlighting the work of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and Latinx scholars. Highlight such activities and training in the Chair's letter of support for promotion and tenure.
- In collaboration with the American Physical Society IDEA for physics, reform the Inclusive Excellence Committee to be a model of shared leadership, with membership from all areas of our community.
- Perform data analysis on award nominations to determine if there are potential biases in nomination procedure.
- An Annual Report of Diversity and Inclusion will be produced annually, beginning in 2020. This report will document major trends in admissions, recruitment, and retention in a manner which complies with student privacy protections. Faculty recruitment statistics will also be presented. Summarized reports of transgressions and exit surveys will be

published as well. We anticipate that the results of this will be presented at annual town halls, and it will be posted on our website.

### Increase Black representation in Physics & Astronomy Research

The Department commits to increasing Black representation in Physics & Astronomy research by:

- Inviting speakers from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Minority Serving Institutions (HBCU/MSI) for seminars and colloquiums. In the event that our speakers are unable to travel, we will use the travel funds to provide honorariums.
- Have student representation on the Colloquium committee.
- Specifically recruit students from diversity focused professional development programs such as the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, the McNair Scholars Program, the UC Leadership & Excellence through Advanced Degrees program, and the UC HBCU Initiative Summer Research Program. For students which participate in these programs at UCI, provide targeted admissions advice and preparation.
- Request that faculty promotion (merit) committees include feedback from graduate students and postdocs as part of their report to the Department. The IE committee will develop sample surveys and interview questions to facilitate this step.
- Provide better engagement opportunities for alumni.
- Host faculty from HBCU/MSIs for the explicit purpose of forming research collaborations. The Department will work with the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Office of Research to coordinate visits and potential funding opportunities.
- Utilize the American Physical Society Bridge Program to recruit diverse graduate students.
- Advertise and sponsor travel for faculty and students to visit HBCUs/MSI to present seminars and explore potential research collaborations.
- Provide proposal consultation for the UC HBCU-Initiative, NSF funded outreach activities, and Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship applications. Discuss such opportunities at annual faculty retreat.
- Provide postdoctoral mentoring and career development plans. Postdoctoral Fellows will have physics faculty preparation plans.

This community action plan builds off of the Code of Conduct established by the Department, which we will continue to implement and enforce in a more transparent manner and based on best practices.