

Keck School of Medicine of USC

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Dear KSOM Community,

Like many of you, I received the news of Derek Chauvin's conviction for the murder of George Floyd with a mixture of relief and sadness. Relief that the evidence of our eyes – as captured in the 9 minutes and 25 seconds video – were confirmed by a jury of peers, but sadness that this reasonable conclusion was in such doubt. At the Keck School of Medicine (KSOM), we have little direct influence on the criminal legal system, but we do have a role to play in addressing racism that is embedded in our institutional life and work.

As such, we are obliged to engage in reflection, learning, and planning to address the ways that racism impacts our students, staff, faculty, community partners and patients.

Current efforts in this area include the redesign of our medical school curriculum that places health justice at its center. Future medical school graduates will understand how social determinants of health are linked to political, economic, and social structures that cause racial disparities in health outcomes and will be trained in clinical, community, and advocacy methods to address these structured inequalities.

In addition, I have convened a group of faculty, staff, and students to develop and implement a plan for improving diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice and wellness at KSOM. This group, Justice through Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Wellness and Social Transformation (JEDI-WeST), has developed several initiatives that address recruitment and retention, community relations, addressing implicit biases and microaggressions, and supporting upstanding and allyship with a goal of improving psychological safety and supporting diversity, equity and inclusion at KSOM. As funding becomes available, please look for opportunities to participate in the work of JEDI-WeST.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge similar efforts that are occurring within KSOM departments and centers where committees are being formed, curricula are being reviewed, and vice chairs and program directors are being appointed to facilitate diversification of students, faculty and staff and improve our learning and working environments.

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In my view, all of these efforts align with University-wide endeavors to address institutionalized racism (see REDI Task Force Report <https://diversity.usc.edu/files/2021/03/REDI-REPORT-3087.pdf>), promote USC's unifying values(<https://change.usc.edu/files/2021/04/USC-Culture-Journey-Six-Unifying-Values-and-Behaviors.pdf>), and achieve excellence in education, research and service. KSOM is playing an essential role in the social transformation needed to ensure equity and health for all. I look forward to working with all of you as we strive for this shared goal.

Warm regards,

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