This message is from Dr. Steven R. Garfin, Interim Dean, School of Medicine, on behalf of the Executive Sponsors of the UC San Diego Health Sciences Anti-Racism Task Force.

Last summer we announced our intention to take four immediate actions to reaffirm our institutional commitment to continue to eradicate racism within UC San Diego Health Sciences and the UC San Diego Health System.

First, we launched two new leadership recruitments in response to the need to eliminate racism throughout our institution — an Assistant Vice Chancellor for the professional schools and a Chief Administrative Officer in the Health system — who will be responsible for leading efforts in these areas and help us drive institutional change. We solicited feedback from faculty, staff, students, and residents in preparing the scope of responsibilities. The search committees comprise broad representation from these groups, and we plan to invite additional members of the Health Sciences community to participate in the interview process. The application window is currently open for the Assistant Vice Chancellor: https://apol-recruit.ucsd.edu/JPF02611 and the Chief Administrative Officer: https://www.wittkieffer.com/position/22115-chief-administrative-officer-health-equity-diversity-and-inclusion/.

Second, we announced our intention to create an Anti-Racism Task Force. We initiated an open application process for faculty, staff, trainees, and students committed to advancing anti-racism and health equity initiatives across UC San Diego Health and UC San Diego Health Sciences and are thrilled to have received widespread interest and enthusiasm for this effort. Every SOM student and resident who submitted a complete application has been invited to participate on one of the work streams. We have divided the Task Force into nine sub-groups, all of which have begun their work. The Task Force Steering Committee will provide quarterly updates to our Executive Sponsors group, which includes Vice Chancellor Petitt. A central landing page hosting work stream membership, charters, and progress reports is under development.

Third, we committed to forming a committee to address respect, language, and professionalism in the healthcare setting. This committee, which has been folded into the broader Task Force, is in the final stages of gaining approval for a policy to address racism and discrimination from patients and visitors at our hospitals and clinics. Once final, this committee will focus on developing protocols, reviewing policies, and reinforcing reporting mechanisms to support our students, residents/fellows, staff, and faculty when they experience racist interactions across the Health System. As with the other work streams, updates from this group will be reported out through the Task Force Steering Committee.

Finally, we committed to mandate anti-racist training for deans, health system leaders, department chairs, residency program directors, course and clerkship directors, committee chairs, small group facilitators, MM interviewers, and faculty/attendings. The Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science and Sanford Institute for
Empathy and Compassion have already implemented their own training sessions. For all others, we have solicited proposals from external organizations and are in the process of seeking contract approval to engage Advancing Health Equity (AHE), the group recommended by our medical students and residents. We anticipate the first training sessions to occur this spring. We have also tasked one of the Task Force work streams to help identify long-term and sustainable training options for Health Sciences faculty, staff, students, trainees, and administrative leaders. Several departments, including the Division of Medical Education, have initiated their own anti-racism journal clubs as well.

In addition to these four commitments, we are making progress on a number of other fronts as well:

We are also engaging AHE to complete an audit of the Division of Medical Education. In partnership with our new Vice Dean for Medical Education, Michelle Daniel, we are in the final stages of contract review and scoping. We hope the audit will launch within the next two months.

We have also released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an EDI audit of the Health System. The resulting engagement is meant to provide a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative assessment of Health System practices and policies, identify inequitable outcomes, and make recommendations to eliminate racial bias from the organization. This work is meant to help highlight areas of opportunity and the health system and will guide the Chief Administrative Officer’s work as they establish targets and goals.

Since this summer, our Advancement colleagues have made generating scholarship support for students dedicated to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism a priority and have already secured $350K for current use, with another $1M committed in the future through a bequest. In addition, we are exploring an expansion of the Conditional Acceptance Program and possible expansion of PRIME.

The Admissions team reports that to-date 10% of our admitted students are Black, a significant increase from prior years. The DCP Office initiated Black-Student-Resident-Faculty Zoom mixers. One took place this fall with another planned for this quarter. Admitted Black students have been invited to the Winter Quarter mixer, and to join medical students in viewing the premier of the Black Men in White Coats documentary.

We recently created the Sandra Daley Award for Advancement of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. This award is designed to recognize a graduating student who champions the ideals of equity, diversity, and inclusion – through curricular or extracurricular activities, scholarship, and other outstanding achievements.

We participated in a campus-wide “Conversation on Transformational Policing at UC San Diego” to share concerns based on interactions between Black medical students and UCSD Police, and to offer suggestions pertaining to racially based non-emergency calls and managing mental health emergencies.

We continue to participate in a UC-wide initiative on “Race Conscious Medicine” to discuss the origins of racial categories in medicine, the controversies surrounding current use, and future directions for incorporating a race-conscious approach into clinical care, medical education, and research, in the context of advancing health equity across all of the UC
academic medical institutions.

We know that these issues have not gone away and are dedicated to continuing to address them. We appreciate your commitment to making UC San Diego a place where everyone has the opportunity to succeed. We will provide another quarterly update in late May.