



Feb. 23, 2021

Dear UMB Community,

As we near the end of Black History Month, I wish to reiterate that the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) believes that **Black lives matter**. I hope that no one regards this as a controversial statement.

We declare that Black lives matter because we continue to see so many examples of where our Black siblings' lives are cut short, treated unfairly, and denied opportunities. The phrase is intended as an acknowledgment that our society has devalued Black lives for centuries in ways impossible to enumerate. "Black lives matter" does not mean that other lives do not matter. Rather, it draws attention to a pandemic-level need for justice and reform to right many wrongs.

Our nation suffers under the enduring legacy of centuries of white supremacy — upholding whiteness or Eurocentricity as a norm and standard in society. Inequality, oppression, and injustice are the lingering effects of a country that has not reconciled with its past. We see massive levels of incarceration, health care disparities, poor educational outcomes, poverty, and lack of opportunity.

We have seen the particularly profound, deep-rooted effects of racism revealed through the brutality inflicted by police and others upon unarmed Black people. Last year, we saw tragic video footage of the brutal killings of George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery and the shooting of Jacob Blake. We learned of the killing of Breonna Taylor and the suffocation of mentally ill Daniel Prude. And we are only slightly more than five years removed from Freddie Gray dying in Baltimore from injuries suffered while in police custody.

The harms suffered by Black and Brown people are not limited to death or physical injury. They occur in the everyday occurrences, steeped in anti-Blackness, that denigrate and marginalize. It is impossible to overstate this point.

We put up banners at UMB that say Black lives matter as a sign of a deep commitment to demonstrating that belief through action. But banners are not enough. We recognize the need for justice and systemic change in the country and the need to examine our own responsibility and not be afraid of what may be uncomfortable or inconvenient. With humility, knowing we are not perfect, we

commit to being open to explore all of the ways we have room to grow in this area as we commit to anti-racism as individuals and as an institution.

In a month dedicated to celebrating the accomplishments of Black Americans, it is sobering that we still need to say Black lives matter. That being said, I want you all to know how proud I am that UMB is committed to anti-racism. I support this work, and I encourage each member of the UMB community to engage in critical self-examination, knowledge building, and developing accountability measures connected to the eradication of policies, practices, and behaviors that support systemic racism. Our mission to improve the human condition and serve the public good requires us all to do so.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS
President

This note was authorized for distribution to the University of Maryland, Baltimore community by the Office of the President.

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