



Message of Support from Associate Dean LaVar J. Charleston

Dear School of Education students, faculty, and staff:

As many of you have learned, the unnecessary death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, at the hands of several Minneapolis police officers has sparked feelings of anger, outrage, and despair for many members of our community, state, and country. The death of Mr. Floyd is the latest in a series of racialized aggressions against black people in and around our country. We recognize that these events have a significant impact on many members of our School community, but particularly those who are black. We are devastated, heartbroken, outraged, angry, and frankly, in anguish and grief over the consistent and senseless killings of unarmed black people in our country. This is indeed an extremely painful moment, which undoubtedly has added to the feelings of anxiety brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We recognize that while these events did not occur in the Madison area, the impact is nonetheless salient. Some will choose to exercise their First Amendment right to free speech by advocating for social justice both within our School and the broader campus community. Others across the nation have, unfortunately, resorted to rioting, though we understand that these riots are representative of decades of pain, grief, hurt, and unheard/unmet humanity. That said, the School of Education supports peaceful protest with physical distancing, and joins the chorus of many others throughout this country, calling for accountability and justice. While these officers' actions only make up a small percentage of officers that behave in this way, these actions represent systemic issues and are unacceptable at any level of leadership or job classification.

The School of Education has made it a priority to create an [inclusive community](#) where all members are valued and feel like they belong. Accordingly, the School of Education stands in solidarity with those impacted by these recent events. In response to these latest incidents, the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, in partnership with other units across the School of Education, is in the process of planning a virtual gathering to address police brutality, solidarity, and the role of building relationships and working with allies in addressing racism. Details will be shared soon regarding this event via the School of Education's website and social media channels.

In the meantime, we encourage all of you to lean on your support networks during these painful times. For those who are feeling a sense of mental anguish and/or isolation during these uncertain and difficult times, the university has several free mental health resources online, including:

- [SilverCloud](#) can assist with anxiety and stress management;
- The [Center for Healthy Minds](#) offers resilience and mindfulness training; and
- [LifeMatters](#) for faculty and staff seeking assistance with life, work, family, and well-being.

Please do not hesitate to use these resources and reach out to someone you trust for support.

These are really tough, hurtful, heartbreaking, and uncertain times. But as always, we will get through these times, together.

In Community,

LaVar J. Charleston, Ph.D.

Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

School of Education