

UACOM-P Black Alumni Statement on Anti-Black Racism and the State of The College

The black alumni of UACOM-P are heartbroken following the inhumane killing of Mr. George Floyd on May 25, in Minneapolis, MN. Sadly Mr. Floyd's death at the hands of police is not unique as this has occurred routinely in the black community. We also mourn the loss of Mr. Ahmaud Arbery (GA), Ms. Breonna Taylor (KY), Mr. Tony McDade (FL), Mr. David McAtee (KY), and others. As a community, we extend our thoughts and prayers to their families.

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a grim milestone of over 100,000 deaths disproportionately impacting the Black community, there is also a pandemic of racism, inequality, and discrimination in our country. These events compound the historical racial traumas endured by the black community through the present day.

To provide some historical context, in 2016 following the murder of Freddie Gray and Philando Castille and the national crisis in our country, black students approached the UACOM-P administration requesting their support for a White Coats for Black Lives photo. We were met with immediate resistance and directed to change the context of our demonstration to appease a few conservative students who endorsed an All Lives Matter rhetoric. It was made clear to us that UACOM-P wanted no association with this event; this left us feeling powerless, unheard, and unimportant for the rest of our medical education.

Since its inception in 2007, black-identified individuals at UACOM-P have comprised only 2% of students and alumni, less than 1% of the faculty, and less than 1% of the staff. UACOM-P fails to recruit, enroll, and hire an acceptable number of blacks to its student body and enterprise. As evident, UACOM-P failed to matriculate a black student to the class of 2023.

For many years, the black students at UACOM-P have brought to the forefront issues of diversity and representation. We have met with various administrators to express concerns about the lack of attention to race in the student body, the silence on race in the curriculum, and the absence of black faculty. Despite our efforts and requests, little has changed. This issue is of importance as it has gravely shaped our medical school education and professional career. The black students deal with a disproportionate amount of societal discrimination that transcends into our clinical rotations and experiences on campus.

While appreciated, messages of solidarity to Black lives must be combined with commitments to sustained actions and accountability for change. We call upon UACOM-P leadership to:

- Develop a transparent campus-wide plan of action with accountability by engaging in dialogue, sharing existing data, and collaborating with black students, alumni, faculty, staff, and other campus entities committed to ending racism, uplifting Black lives, racial equity, and health justice;
- Acknowledge and address where our current admission and recruitment system is disadvantageous to applicants of color and those from underrepresented communities. Take on a holistic and comprehensive application and selection process that considers the socioeconomic inequalities and disadvantages that are prevalent in many black and minority communities;
- Develop and increase funding for pipeline and community outreach programs focused on recruiting black community members into medicine;
- Adopt a comprehensive and mandatory four-year curriculum centered on anti-racism and racial justice, that facilitates in-class conversations about race, privilege, allyship, and justice with all students across all content areas;
- Develop and outline a strategic plan to recruit black faculty members by casting a wider net nationally and not just limited to the Southwestern region in addition to seeking assistance from minority physicians organizations like the National Medical Association and Association of Black Women Physicians;
- Develop a process that includes the black students, staff, and faculty and other campus entities in the hiring of administrative and leadership positions across our school and hospital;
- Invest financial and personnel resources in existing groups and organizations that support the Black collective.

We encourage you to distribute this letter by email to the UACOM-P community, including current students, alumni, faculty, and staff, and to all community members partnered with the UACOM-P, especially those who identify as black, as the beginning of a conversation.

We are willing and readily available to work with the UACOM-P leadership to help fulfill the mission and vision of the school and make it a better place for all.

Respectfully,
UACOM-P Black Alumni Association

Agnes Ewongwo, MD MPH, CO 2020
Alyssa Thomas, MD MPH, CO 2018
Awad Mohamed, MD, CO 2018
Bim Makinde, MD, CO 2011
Dario Alvarez, MD, CO 2020

Fawsia Osman, MD MPH, CO 2020
Nina Lara, MD, CO 2015
Ogaga Ojameruaye, MD, CO 2020
Sandy Peoples, MD, CO 2020
Tosin Ayotunde, MD, CO 2020