



*College of Engineering and Computer Science
Susamma Barua, Dean
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July 22, 2020

Dear Titans,

Thank you for your email. This letter comes directly from me as the Dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science (ECS) on behalf of the college and university administration. I am responding to the email several of us in the College and President Virjee received from Black ECS students.

I want to personally and on behalf of the ECS community commit to more fully support ECS Black students present and future. We stand firmly and in solidarity with the Black students who are part of our community and will work closely with you to change the environment you have experienced here in the College. I really appreciate the sense of compromise in your letter, acknowledging what may be possible now and what may be possible in the future to achieve the outcomes we need.

I hear and take seriously your grievance about Black students' needs being consistently ignored, dismissed, and devalued. This description calls forth those elements of the Black student experience on campus that operate in the background, without many of us being able to see any immediate, concrete way to change. Even though our university has started taking measures to achieve changes in the environment that creates these grievances, I am beginning to understand from the BLM movement and your comments that none of this matters if there is not true "allyship" and support from the college leadership. None of this change can happen without a fundamental understanding of the impact of systemic racism on Black lives through the centuries. It will be my personal mission to learn more and share with others in our community.

At a personal level, I am saddened by what you experience every day, and I believe that the BLM movement has helped me and my colleagues better understand the weight and cost in academic performance and career paths these factors impose on Black students. As engineers and computer scientists, ECS faculty may not have had the opportunity to focus beyond STEM subjects to consider the social and cultural context in which STEM education and thinking takes place. I appreciate the opportunity you are providing me to learn more about the historic and systemic racism that affects every sector of our lives, including STEM education. And, I will help my faculty to continue to learn more about this as well.

I hear your concern of the lack of Black faculty within the college and the importance of having role models that look like you. I hear your concern about the low percentage of Black students in ECS. Without actual Black faculty present, we limit diversity of thought and reduce the likelihood that engineering and science will address the needs of all segments of society. If we cannot immediately add Black faculty, then we need to embrace other methods for providing the support and mentorship you seek. I along with our college leadership already have a number of ideas about how to do this and would like to explore those with a college working group that will include you.

We have worked to hire Black faculty, but as you have acknowledged, the pool is small. The ECS leadership, faculty and staff are committed to innovate our approach towards diversity and inclusion and



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we are teaming up with the Office of Human Resource, Diversity, and Inclusion (HRDI) to develop strategies to recruit Black faculty.

At the university level, there has been a very comprehensive and expansive effort to find immediate remedies that will better support Black students. ECS Black students are part of the Cal State Fullerton student population and will benefit from the university efforts, but let me reaffirm my personal commitment to find ways to leverage non-teaching resources that paired with ECS academic programs will help develop more informed practices in our college.

The pandemic challenges us all to find ways to adapt and to thrive within and beyond this challenging point in time. It also opens the window to thinking in new ways. I look forward to this opportunity to be part of using new ways to remedy the issues you raise in your letter and create a stronger ECS as a result. I hope you will join me, as together we are engineers and computer scientists who can find solutions.

As part of my commitment and ongoing efforts, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you regularly so the ECS leadership and I can share progress on initiatives and listen to suggestions.

I wish you good health during this difficult and uncertain time. Please take care of each other and stay safe.

Sincerely,

Dr. Susamma (Susan) Barua
Dean, College of Engineering and Computer Science
California State University, Fullerton