



SCHOOL OF LAW

June 2, 2020

Dear Mercer Law School Community:

In times that challenge the very soul of who we are as a nation and a profession, we may not always know the right words to offer wisdom or guidance. We do know, however, that silence is not an option.

Too many times over too many years, we've recounted the countless names of Black men and women who were subjected to a death sentence without a charge or trial. As lawyers and lawyers-in-training, we recognize these wrongs, as well as the biases that allowed them to occur. Our community of legal scholars is uniquely positioned to make these wrongs right. We turn, in these times, to our community and to our shared calling to seek a way to truly achieve equal justice under the law.

Over the weekend, the leadership of the Mercer School of Law Black Law Students Association (BLSA) called on other student organizations to use their voices to speak out against racial injustices. An overwhelming number of student organizations answered that call, and have pledged to listen, to be zealous advocates for justice, and to be proactive in shaping the justice system of the future. We are so proud of the leadership we have seen among our students; even in difficult times, we see our community strengthened by mutual support and concern.

We urge our students, faculty, and staff to not see this as a time for a single expression of compassion and support. We encourage you to commit to learning, listening, and acting to change the existing narrative. As a law school, our role is to educate and prepare lawyers to advocate for the voiceless, to recognize and fight against inequities in our legal system, and to right the wrongs against our fellow human beings wherever we see them. Ours is not a profession of the passive – advocacy in pursuit of justice by its nature requires action.

The Civil Rights leader Ella Baker famously said, "In order to see where we are going, we not only must remember where we have been, but we must understand where we have been." So much of law study requires this understanding of both history and perspective, and that is part of what we are called to do here at the law school. Mercer Law students will be the legal leaders of tomorrow and should be well-equipped to understand not only the letter of the law, but also the context in which those laws were developed, even if it means discussing their origins' painful past. We are committed to supporting our students' learning and understanding of where we have been, including where we have faltered, failed, and fallen short in the area of inclusivity, but even more importantly in understanding where we have opportunities to improve those shortcomings as we work toward "a more perfect union" envisioned in our Constitution.

We may not know all the answers, but we know we are called by our shared commitment to human and civil rights to seek a better future. We are committed to changing this narrative and will take active steps to prepare our next generation of lawyers to do the same. Please look for more to come in this area, beginning as soon as we reconvene as a community in August. We remain open to hearing from you about your priorities and concerns. May 2020 be the year that changed our lives, our health perspectives, our priorities, our commitment to our fellow humans, and our tolerance for injustice – forever.

Sincerely,

Your Mercer Law Deans' Office

Cathy Cox, Dean

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