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Dear Suffolk Law students:

Today is Juneteenth, a day when we commemorate the end of slavery in the United States. We can use this moment to reflect on how far we still have to go to remedy slavery's horrific and enduring legacy and to address the profound and deep problem of racial injustice in our country. As a law school, we have a special obligation to pursue justice, to right wrongs when we see them, and to make an impact, not only in the broader community but in our own as well.

Listening and Learning

Taking action first requires understanding the problem. On June 6th, the SBA held a virtual town hall where Professor Landers, Professor Blum, and Judge Bolden presented important background information on the legal and social issues at stake. SBA president Dayana Donisca and other students spoke bravely and candidly about their experiences and beliefs, both during and after the event, and we have an obligation to listen and understand.

The SBA is a vital organization that connects students with each other and with the Law School administration. They develop programs like the recent town hall, and they engage the student body in numerous other ways. I am grateful for their tireless work, especially during these difficult times. As noted in my email earlier this month, we need to continue the conversations that the SBA has started, and we will do so in the weeks ahead.

Action

Listening and learning are important, but we must do more. We must act. To that end, in just the last couple of weeks, the faculty's Diversity & Inclusion Committee has developed a slate of concrete action items directed to the Law School, the University, the broader legal community, and society.

Some of the ideas that the Committee generated, such as possible curricular reforms, came from the discussion at the recent town hall. Others relate to student life, teaching, hiring practices, admissions practices, and experiential opportunities. The entire faculty discussed the Committee's work at a faculty meeting yesterday afternoon, where I expressed my enthusiastic support for the general direction of the Committee's efforts and my commitment to finding ways to implement as many of the recommendations as possible. I look forward to sharing those recommendations as they take a more final form.

A Community Effort

Too often the burden of seeking change falls on those who have been most disadvantaged by the status quo. This must change. We all have an obligation, especially as future legal professionals, to address injustices where we see them. This is our shared obligation. I look forward to working with all of you in the weeks and months ahead to bring about real, meaningful change, both in our broader communities and within our own.

In the meantime, I know that there will be times when communications and discussions will be challenging and uncomfortable. We will not always say or do the right things. I encourage patience, deep listening, and learning. I am confident that, if we approach these issues with openness and understanding, we can make the Law School a better place for all of us and prepare you for the important and impactful roles you will play in advancing the cause of justice.

Best regards,

Andrew Perlman
Dean & Professor of Law