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Dear Neuroscience Institute Community,

Our system has failed the black and minority communities of this country, from leadership at the federal, state and local levels, to the very ranks of the people in law enforcement charged with protecting them. This failure extends to our schools, our healthcare system and many other civic institutions. And yes, this failure also includes us here in the academy! The very buildings we occupy and work in sit on lands taken from the peoples of the Seneca Nation. It is a simple fact that we live in a country built on the historical injustices visited upon the native peoples and founded on the backs of African slaves. It is an insult to these people to talk of a post-racial world, as some might have it, and we have seen this played out most painfully on our TV screens over the years, culminating last week in the horrifying death of George Floyd.

For people of good intention and loving heart, this is a profoundly uncomfortable time. We are left to wonder what we can do. But we need to be asking ourselves also, what have we not done? Expressions of support and aspirations to diversity are all very well, the establishment of diversity offices and appointment of dedicated Deans for equity and inclusion represent real progress, but words are just words, and these actions are only a beginning. Transformational change requires bold and decisive action.

As President Obama put it this week: *"...every step of progress in this country, every expansion of freedom, every expression of our deepest ideals, has been won through efforts that made the status quo uncomfortable."* It is time for us to embrace our discomfort, to recognize the historical injustices that have brought us to this place and time, and to commit for once and for all, to permanent lasting change.

As someone who grew up in a country at war with itself, where sectarian violence brought death and destruction to our streets on a near daily basis, where countrymen and women fought each other and destroyed themselves and their communities over the slimmest of ideological and cultural differences, I look on the current situation with a jaded eye and real fear in my heart, fear for our country, fear for my own children, fear for you my colleagues and friends. I stand with you who protest the injustice meted out to our black and minority communities, and it is well past time that the cries of this community were heard and echoed by those of us with privilege. I just beg you all to be safe and to live to fight on for real justice.

When passions abate and the marching is over, the quiet hard work of change will begin. There is a long road ahead, where controlled fury, deep commitment and perseverance will be required. This cannot all be in vain. I think of Sandy Hook and Marjory Stoneman Douglas, of Abner Louima and Rodney King, of outcry and protest in the wake of these horrific events, and how we were certain in our belief that these must surely mark a point of departure, that the horror of these crimes could not be ignored. And yet, I ask you all to reflect on just how much change was actually affected in their wake. You don't need me to answer that. So, I say to you now, that we in the Neuroscience Institute have no intention of a return to the way it was once the protesting has stopped.

Effective June 15th, we are establishing a Neuroscience Diversity Commission to prepare recommendations for action to our leadership. This commission will be formed from the ranks of our students and trainees, our faculty and post-docs, community leaders, non-academic university staff, and Neuroscience leadership. It will deliver its recommendations by October 1st of this year and these will be used to chart a clear course of action for our Neuroscience Institute. Next year, 2021, will mark the beginning of the second five-year strategic term of the Del Monte Neuroscience Institute. The recommendations of the Diversity Commission will be adopted as the Number 1 priority of the Institute and will command the same designation of resources and effort as the other priority programs. We will work with University leadership to chart this path and we will make every effort in the Philanthropic domain to secure additional funds to progress this agenda, above and beyond the appropriation available through the Del Monte. The recruitment of minority faculty will be a priority area. Our students deserve to interact with role models amongst our ranks who look like them, who share their culture, who understand first-hand

what it is to walk in their shoes. Increased recruitment and retention of underrepresented students in Neuroscience will be another priority. Our Neuroscience Institute must represent our society, and we affirm that Diversity is essential for excellence in science.

This is a firm commitment of the Neuroscience Institute leadership. It is a plan to ensure that George Floyd does not simply join a long list of injustices to the black community – Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Tyree Crawford, Trayvon Martin, Breonna Taylor, a list so long it defies belief. Rather, it is a commitment to an active intentional agenda that will enact lasting change. We walk with you and we hear you, we are enraged with you, and we will listen to you. Help us make this a better world for you and for the generations to come.

In Science and Solidarity,
John J. Foxxe, Ph.D.