

Like so many of you, the Science Policy Society is appalled and ashamed by Penn State University's and President Barron's response of inaction to the racial incident that occurred at a peaceful protest for Black Lives Matter, Sunday, May 31st, in Aston, Pennsylvania. As we have witnessed the repeated injustice against Black lives and subsequent violence against peaceful protestors, we acknowledge the University's response as tone deaf and harmful to the progression of racial equality and justice that students, faculty, and individuals within the community and across the nation are trying to achieve. By *choosing* to not act, Pennsylvania State University and President Barron remain complicit in racial injustices committed against communities of color. We encourage the administration to reconsider their response to this tragedy that has traumatized so many within the PSU community. The University administration must prioritize the safety and well-being of their students against racism, uphold the University's code of conduct, and *take action*. To address systemic racism at the University and within the community and to condemn racism and racist actions, Penn State should do the following:

**A. Penn State must address systemic racism on campus and in our relationships with our communities.**

Our University is not exempt from systemic racism [i.e. 1, 2]. The safety and academic freedom of Black and minority students, faculty, and staff must be ensured. Towards this effort we ask the University to (1) employ a third-party consultant to review metrics for tenure and hiring and publish these findings publicly. (2) Expand the funding, staff, and authority of the Paul Robeson Cultural Center, Multicultural Resource Center, Office of Graduate Educational Equity Programs, and the Office of Multicultural Affairs (or its equivalent) in each college. (3) Promote transparency and community oversight by releasing the organizational charts and detailed annual budget of Penn State.

**B. Penn State must take responsibility for a campus climate that is accepting of racism.**

Penn State's inaction in response to incidents of racism in our community places the institution on the side of the oppressor, not the oppressed. There must be consequences for individuals who violate the code of conduct. Public universities have taken appropriate action in response to racism in their communities, expelling students who propagate the ignorance and intolerance Penn State has promised to fight [3]. This precedent establishes an avenue for action, despite concerns over violating free speech. As such, Penn State as an institution must hold its members accountable for a climate that allows racism. Measures to be taken include (1) broadening educational resources covering oft-neglected black and minority history, race theory, and art, rewarding individual involvement; (2) establishing university-wide policies for students, staff, and faculty that explicitly prohibit hate speech and racism with an appropriate spectrum of consequences ending with expulsion or termination [4]; and (3) evaluating the climate of this community through independently organized, thoroughly funded surveys and transparently communicating the findings. *Failure to do so implicitly prioritizes the free speech of intolerance over that of those protesting it.*

**C. We ask that Penn State stand with UMN and a growing number of peers who are divesting from police departments and private security companies**

Penn State police funding should be redirected towards services dedicated to targeting the underlying conditions that lead to crime, services including housing, healthcare, and education. Local police and private security companies should not be affiliated with campuses, and instead replaced by community-led policing alternatives. These should include funding for mental health crisis intervention and restorative justice training. PSU needs to stand in solidarity in fighting systemic racism within the police infrastructure by condemning the recent murder of Osaze Osagie and publishing budgets and contracts of the Penn State Police and any other private security organizations hired by the University.

The phrase "We Are" is often associated with the 1948 football season in which Penn State refused to submit to segregationist pressure, fostering a spirit of inclusion and community for all its members [5]. Penn State's action in response to racial injustice must not be relegated to a single moment in history. We demand an ongoing commitment to action, creating a community culture that embodies the legacy of "We Are" for all its members.

On behalf of Science Policy Society  
Summary of CGE Letter, in support of their proposed policy changes

**Citations:**

- [1] Dr. Errol A. Henderson. "[Being Black at Penn State](#)". Daily Collegian. January 2019.
- [2] Dr. Gary King, Dr. Darryl Thomas. "More Rivers to Cross: A Report on the Status of African American Professors at Penn State University (UP), Part 1". January 2020.
- [3] Shailaja Neelakantan. "[After Racist Posts About George Floyd, Some Colleges Expel Students, Professor Resigns](#)". Diverse Issues in Higher Education. June 2020.
- [4] Matt DiSanto. "[UPUA, Black Caucus, Penn State NAACP Call For Change To University's Code Of Conduct](#)". Onward State. June 2020.
- [5] Mark Wogenrich. "[Penn State football: Recalling Wally Triplett and Dennie Hoggard's Cotton Bowl legacy](#)". The Morning Call. December 2019.