This spring has been marked by grief, sadness, and anger. The Covid-19 pandemic and unjust violence against Black people have exposed structures of racial inequalities in our society. Racism affects all of us. These crises are a call to action.

Architectural education, and the profession, has too often been complicit in structures of exclusion for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). We need to willfully account for and confront the systemic racism and white privilege that has been part of the default operating system for design education and practice. How can we challenge and transform architecture when it is caught in this system of injustice and oppression? How can we commit to approaches, informed policies, and sustainable actions that protect and support communities of color who are disproportionately affected by the ravages of the pandemic as well as by white supremacy? These are the difficult questions that need our urgent attention today.
UMass Department of Architecture is proud of its mission to provide an accessible, intellectually rigorous design education that embraces spirited, socially progressive, and environmentally responsive design. As New England's first public architecture program, we seek to significantly broaden the interest in and access to architecture.

We know that architecture and the built environment play a critical role in creating safe and healthy spaces to live, yet communities of color have traditionally been marginalized from the design process and the number of licensed Black architects in Massachusetts is exceptionally low. Design education has a responsibility to contribute to positive change, and we acknowledge that as educators we can do better. We can do more to support BIPOC architecture students find their voice and vision in ways that we have not done before.

Our statement is a response to the ongoing crisis, but we do not intend to stop here. As educators we commit ourselves to confronting the reality of institutional racism in our country and pledge to expand our efforts to confront implicit biases and to hold ourselves accountable.

We commit to
Provide opportunities for our students to learn about architecture's role in issues of social justice
  - Offer courses that focus on participatory practices, spatial justice and anti-racist strategies
  - Engage topics of equity and inclusion in all our courses

Support our Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students
  - Support the creation of a National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) student chapter
  - Offer our Designing Opportunity Fund to support engagement of BIPOC students in conferences and events that support their education

Elevate the work of BIPOC designers and educators so that all students are exposed to diverse voices
  - Address course syllabi to ensure that students are exposed to the work of diverse architects through precedents, readings, and projects
  - Ensure that our speaker series, gallery exhibitions, and design critiques feature architects, artists, architecture historians of color
  - Invite Designing in Color (co-founded by UMass Dept. of Architecture alumni Opalia Meade and Christopher Locke and others) to workshop with faculty and students on racial justice issues in
Help increase the number of BIPOC designers in our programs and the profession

- Focus on recruitment efforts and collaborations with urban public universities, HBCUs, and community colleges that will bring more BIPOC students to our degree programs

Grow our faculty diversity and improve faculty fluency with and accountability for racial justice issues

- Recruit and hire BIPOC educators for open positions
- Spend time in faculty meetings and retreats learning and reflecting on racism, whiteness, and applying that knowledge in support of cultural and institutional change

We have looked to our faculty, our students, and organizations such as NOMA and the AIA's Equity in Architecture Commission to learn about ways to improve our practice. This statement is a first step in an overdue process, and we invite you to offer your own actionable ideas, hold us accountable, and work alongside us with urgency and compassion to create change.

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