

July 27, 2020

Dear Students in UHComD,

In the past months I'm sure you've seen many letters and statements about racism and social justice from many organizations, including UH, CLASS and ComD.

While the COMD response to George Floyd's death and the local and national attention to racism began with a statement, I want to assure you that it will not end there. As Chair of ComD I am committed to learning, studying our department, and most importantly, making change. I want to be thoughtful and strategic so that we do this well and the actions we select are the best ones to make the most meaningful change. I have no illusions that this process will be quick or easy. I ask for your patience but also your feedback.

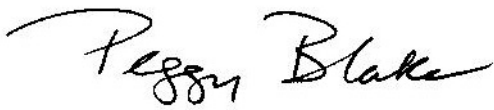
The following department-level steps are currently in progress:

- Revision of the complaint process and grievance policy to include reporting to the UH office of Equal Opportunity Services (EOS) in cases of discrimination or harassment.
- Review of admission requirements for the MA program, including the GRE.
- Creation of a ComD Task Force on Racism and Discrimination made up of faculty and staff with representation of alumni and our Community Advisory Board. Our goals will be to carefully examine ComD procedures, processes, and behaviors to identify systemic racism and discrimination in any form within our department and then set specific objectives to make meaningful, measurable change. We will be seeking advising from offices on campus, including the Center for Diversity and Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Services, to guide our work. If we determine it is appropriate, we will also work with advisors outside of UH from within the fields of speech-language pathology and interpreting.
- Students, faculty, and staff can submit complaints, comments, and questions to the UH EOS office at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/make-a-report/>. Upon receipt and review of the issues, EOS will contact the appropriate person(s) in ComD.
- The Department of UHComD has signed on in support of a petition to create a task force with in the field of speech-language pathology to address racism. Faculty, staff, and students have been invited to also sign on individually. <https://www.change.org/CAATaskForce>

Personally, I have been on a journey for several years to become more aware and more educated about racism and discrimination in all its forms. I am much more aware now of my privilege and the relatively sheltered nature of my experiences but know that I still have a very long way to go. I am extremely fortunate to have friends and colleagues from various backgrounds to accompany me on this journey.

ComD often prides itself on being open to diversity and strong in cultural competence and humility. I want to ensure that this pride is based on the reality within the department and is not simply aspirational. I want to be the leader of a department where students, staff, and faculty are comfortable being who they are and are valued for their unique contributions and multi-faceted backgrounds, including racial, geographical, ethnic, linguistic, gender, educational, and generational components.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Blake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "P" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Peggy Blake
Professor & Chair

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and the Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders stand with the African American community and all other oppressed communities against systemic, social and racial oppression. We assert that racism, discrimination, classism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and other weapons of divisive hate have no place on college campuses or in civil society, domestic or abroad.

We, collectively, are deeply saddened by the violent, untimely and senseless murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and countless other Black people in the United States. Our hearts are heavy, our heads are bowed, and our knees are bent in solidarity with their families and others that have experienced systematic oppression since the founding of our nation.

As producers and disseminators of knowledge, we embrace the obligation to prepare our students for the richly diverse world that they will inherit as critical-thinking members of society. Further, our obligation is to prepare them to interact with people from diverse backgrounds and to challenge epistemologies, policies and dogma that promote vitriolic attacks on difference.

We are committed and urge all of you to be active in the struggle to eradicate injustice everywhere in order to foster a world that is more loving, peaceful, kind, compassionate and just.