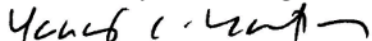



MEMORANDUM

To: Viterbi Community

From: Brandi Jones, Vice Dean for Diversity and Strategic Initiatives
Yannis C. Yortsos, Dean  

Date: October 26, 2020

Subject: Steps Toward Commitment to Engineer a Better World

On June 1, 2020, we [reaffirmed our commitment](#) to “inclusiveness, to humanity, to the complete and unconditional respect of everyone among us.” And to “sustain and further improve an inclusive culture that respects, treasures, and helps reach the unlimited potential of every individual in our extended Viterbi family, in our society, and in our world.” The message was driven by the realization that “our ambition for a better world collides with an environment—stemming from dreadful historical roots—where racist and socially divisive practices try to tear us apart.” Following that memo, the Viterbi School proceeded promptly with a Call to Action.

This memo is intended to highlight the action taken so far and to provide a timeline of how it is being implemented. The [Viterbi website](#) provides additional details, and we invite you to visit it.

On June 26, 2020, we sent to all academic and administrative units of the Viterbi school a request to provide their input on how can “USC Viterbi continue to evolve.... with overarching goal the equity and respect of the humanity and individual dignity of all our Viterbi family”. We pointed out that “in all such efforts, we should be willing to acknowledge, educate, stand up, commit to change, dedicate resources, prioritize, and be accountable for all instances that violate these principles.” An important part of our plan was to consider implementing the recommendations of a [paper](#) some of us wrote in 2017, which we will briefly refer to as the Parity Objective.

Briefly, we pointed out that all such action contains three important frames: *analytical* (based on data and measuring representation, equity and inclusion), *ethical and moral*, that drive our determination and commitment, and *legal*.

Following the very useful feedback we received from all our academic and administrative units, we then proceeded on September 9, 2020 to summarize all responses into one concise, [one-page document](#) on USC Viterbi Equity-Minded Action. This document articulates steps to be taken to keep advancing “racial equity and inclusion”, based on three key tenets: Representation matters; Engagement and Support matter; Equity and Inclusion matter. The document provided action plans for all our activities.

Proceeding forward, we then created specific Working Groups, that span across all areas of activity in the Viterbi School: Undergraduate Students, Graduate Students, Faculty and Academic Departments, Staff, Teaching and Research. These working groups have met and are actively pursuing their tasks. The [Viterbi website](#) provides regular updates of the progress being made.

In parallel, we would like to bring attention to the very successful podcast series [Escape Velocity](#) that presents the lived experiences of many of our Black faculty and students. As well as to a [seminal address](#) at the Annual Meeting of the National Academy of Engineering by our distinguished colleague Professor John Slaughter. We invite everyone to listen to his moving address or read it [here](#).

The USC Viterbi School of Engineering continues to be committed to *engineer a better world for all humanity*, a goal that is more pressing now than ever before. We are very proud that the Viterbi community is fully supportive of this effort and stands as a paradigm among many in changing the conversation about engineering, *who we are, what we do and what we look like*.