June 5, 2020

Dear Students at University of California, Riverside,

The Department of Dance at UC Riverside expresses its full support of the *UCR Demands to Administration - Call to Action* that members of the Black Student Union, ASUCR, Sisters Affirming our Socio-Cultural Identities, and Queer Alliance, and a number of other student organizations sent to Chancellor Wilcox and the UCR administration on May 31, 2020. We recognize the extraordinary circumstances our students, and Black students in particular, have been experiencing due to COVID-19, the intensification of genocidal and colonial violence against Black people, and the ongoing trauma and State terror of white supremacy. We share your concerns that UCR is not doing enough to effectively provide the support and care our Black students need.

The Department of Dance is disgusted by the multifarious violence continuously committed against Black people; this includes murders committed with impunity as well as state-sanctioned violence and assassination. We will not tolerate this state of affairs on campus (physical, virtual or ideological), in our communities or beyond. The deadly impact of ongoing systemic racism and white supremacist violence, including the recent murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, as well as the much less publicized murders of Black Trans folks like Tony McDade and Nina Pop, among countless others who have not received justice nor acknowledgement, requires us to dig deeper as a collective, and to be more critical and urgent about eradicating the oppression that this and other institutions operate within, and are in danger of replicating lest we take action.

As a faculty largely comprised of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, South Asian, and LGBTQ folks, an equally diverse student body and staff, and whose curriculum is indebted to African diasporic practices, we are outraged by all the ways that we as an institution continue to perpetuate anti-Black racism and undermine our mission of expanding possibility and opportunity for, and providing for the safety of, our community, especially BIPOC students, staff and faculty, from whom the institution profits. The demands laid out in the *Call to Action* are critical, and our departments and administration must support them with urgent, immediate action. We acknowledge that our response is late, and that this lateness is a failure. This letter
is the beginning of the work we have to do to protect, honor, and support the Black and African Diasporic community within our department.

In an effort to support and to enact transformative change NOW:

1. **WE WILL NOT FAIL** any students who participated in our courses in Spring 2020.

2. **WE WILL OFFER (during this crisis of humanity)** multiple grading options and flexibility to accommodate varied student experiences and hardships in our courses for Spring 2020: S/NC, Letter Grade, Incomplete and Withdrawal options/changes are available through June 12th. Students should consult with their instructors and academic advisors immediately for an accommodating solution.

3. **WE WILL FIGHT fiercely** for a safer campus, with the goal of divesting from UCPD. We cannot tolerate the inherent and institutionalized racism and anti-Blackness of law enforcement, and UCPD has a long and egregiously unchecked record of violence and injustice towards BIPOC on campus and in Riverside, including Black students and guest artists within the department.

4. **WE WILL CENTER Black voices, ideas and research, and work diligently to decolonize** the academic canon and the epistemological and methodological praxes in our field and related disciplines, as well as in our graduate and undergraduate curriculum design. We will also address chronic racial inequities in hiring, resources offered, advancement of staff and faculty, policy making, language use, administrative leadership, and labor practices.

5. **WE WILL EXPAND recruitment and financial support of Black students** at the department level and in conjunction with CHASS, Undergraduate Student Affairs and Graduate Division.

and

6. **WE WILL BE IN ACTION to educate ourselves** individually and to regularly offer resources and programming that supports the dismantling and combat of anti-Blackness and racism in our department.
We are committed to the ongoing work of transforming the Department of Dance and to making real change happen across campus on behalf of the entire student body. Understanding that anti-Blackness and racism are systematically, socially and culturally pervasive, we recognize that being a department of mostly BIPOC and Queer people does not absolve us from the work of eradicating anti-Blackness. We do not yet have all the answers, but we remain committed to listening, dialoguing and working to meet our students' needs.

In Strength,

The Department of Dance Faculty and Graduate Students