

SLHS's Statement of Commitment to Racial Justice

[Recent events](#) have ignited national conversations about the racism inherent in American society, politics, culture, and education. We stand with those who condemn racism in all its forms and affirm that we, in SLHS, believe that Black lives matter, across the spectrum of gender identity. We also acknowledge that hate-motivated acts target other groups as well, as we have seen a dramatic spike in racial discrimination against Asians and Asian Americans in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are taking this time as an opportunity to reflect on how we as faculty and staff, along with our students, can continue to foster a just, fair, and anti-racist School, community, and society.

Approximately 94% of professionals in the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology are white, while the clients whom we serve represent the entire spectrum of racial and ethnic diversity. [As is true in healthcare professions in general](#), this imbalance has historically led to an inadequate understanding on the part of clinicians about the needs of minority communities, and insufficient development and use of culturally sensitive assessment and treatment tools. More often than we would like to imagine, the result has been inequitable treatment of under-represented minorities. While there have been substantial gains made in these areas, problems of equity persist in our field. We are ethically obligated to do what we can to continue changing this dynamic by investing in student education in the areas of diversity and equity, supporting our under-represented minority students at every level, increasing the diversity of those enrolled in our programs, and working for change in the broader field of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

SLHS has long been committed to creating an equitable, supportive environment, creating a research base for equitable practices, and training speech, language, and hearing professionals to live these values and principles throughout their careers. **Our past and ongoing actions to support and educate our students include the following:**

- We engage in cultural diversity and inclusion initiatives at multiple levels through the San Diego State University community:
 - We have engaged all faculty and staff in [training on implicit bias and microaggressions](#) with the [SDSU Professors of Equity in Education](#). Many faculty and staff have pursued further education and additional reading in these areas to strengthen their awareness and skills in these areas.
 - Our faculty and staff have signed on to SDSU's [Pledge of Support for the University's African-American Community](#), to directly support Black students through campus programs and through our own continued learning.
 - Our faculty and staff have attended [healing circles](#) and a [teach-in](#) that were held in response to the deaths of George Floyd and others.
 - We participated in [developing a new diversity plan](#) for our College of Health and Human Services, including developing concrete future actions. This has been part of a University-wide effort of [diversity planning](#) led by the SDSU Division of Diversity and Inclusion and will provide a roadmap for revising the SLHS Diversity and Inclusion plan during the 2020-2021 academic year.

- We have prioritized recruitment and support of under-represented minorities through our Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) training grants for masters and doctoral students and through the research focus of many of our faculty members on cultural and linguistic diversity.
- We have prioritized creating a diverse faculty, within the limitations of a field that is overwhelmingly white. We have focused tenure-track searches in alignment with the values of SDSU's [Building on Inclusive Excellence hiring program](#).

As part of our commitment to supporting equity and diversity in our School, our faculty and staff are strongly committed to listening and learning. We recognize that we can always do better. Recent world events have made even more visible the disparities and the unique needs of all under-represented minorities, and the Black community in particular. In light of all of this, we are currently developing additional actions to help us continue learning and improving.

Steps currently underway and under development for the future:

- Academic and clinical faculty are currently engaging in training on equity-minded teaching and ways of creating and sustaining a safe, welcoming environment for all students, whether in-person or online. We are committed to:
 - Allowing and encouraging difficult conversations around equity issues in Communication Sciences and Disorders, both within and outside of our classrooms.
 - Recognizing and immediately addressing microaggressions in the classroom and beyond.
 - Including diverse voices and faces in the research we discuss, the clinical cases we present, the guest speakers we invite, and the readings we recommend in our classrooms.
 - Amplifying the words and ideas of Black and Brown students, faculty, staff, clients, community members, and members of our professions.
- We have assembled a group of concerned faculty, staff, students, and alumni to more directly tackle issues of equity as they relate to the Black community.
- Faculty are continuing their commitment to the [Pledge of Support for the University's African-American Community](#), with a particular recognition of our obligation and desire to meet the unique needs of Black students, and all under-represented minorities, in SLHS.
- We are supporting student efforts to engage with their national student organizations on issues of equity and diversity, through our graduate and undergraduate National Student Speech-Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) and Student Academy of Audiology (SAA) chapters. In addition, faculty are engaging in these efforts with our national organizations (ASHA, AAA), as well.
- We are developing avenues to give students a voice in planning for and implementing equity-related changes in SLHS, such as an anonymous feedback portal and listening circles.
- We are working with the University to promote holistic admissions processes for our graduate programs, which will [reduce equity gaps](#).

- We are identifying and assembling reading materials on the topic of anti-racism, specifically as it relates to education, healthcare in general, and Communication Sciences and Disorders in particular, that can be shared with faculty and students. We are considering how to create opportunities to explore these readings as a community.
- We are developing statements that faculty can use in course syllabi to reinforce the importance of anti-racist values in our classes. These include:
 - Setting guidelines for classroom behavior and discussions (both face-to-face and online) that will support an inclusive climate.
 - Opening avenues of communication between students and faculty on issues of race, social justice, diversity and equity in our School and University and in the field of Communication Sciences and Disorders.
 - Assuring that all students know about University-wide channels for support around issues of equity and discrimination, including the [Inclusive SDSU Communication System](#).
- In our revision of the SLHS Diversity Plan over the 2020-2021 academic year, we will focus on specific additional actions that can be taken to:
 - Improve our success at fostering a welcoming environment for students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds, such as by analyzing equity gaps in student achievement and creating opportunities for faculty and staff to build inclusive support practices.
 - Become aware of, and respond to, problems surrounding equity and diversity quickly and effectively when they arise.
 - Continue to recruit faculty and staff to better represent and serve our diverse student populations. These efforts [are a critical foundation](#) to the success of minority students, will yield a more diverse pool of applicants to our undergraduate and graduate programs, and will help build a more diverse profession.
 - Advance racial and social justice, anti-racism, and cultural diversity across the curriculum. This will support our mission to educate speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and research scientists to interact with our clients with cultural humility in the process of evidence-based practice.
- We are considering initiatives to raise awareness of our field in high school and undergraduate students of color as a step toward diversifying the field of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

This is a **living document** with our preliminary list, and we know it will grow and develop as we continue to listen, reflect, and learn. We look forward to engaging on these issues with the entire SLHS community as we move forward to address and dismantle structural racism within our School, our University, our Professions, and our world.