

Dear MSE community,

The problems of social injustice and racism in our communities compel us to look inward at ourselves and ask what we can do to confront racism and bias as a department. Particularly timely are the issues of anti-Black racism, which we are seeing manifest in our local, national and international communities. We also recognize that other members of our department community experience discrimination, including Asian, Latinx, international students and LGBTQ+ groups. By promoting an anti-racist culture, we aim to mitigate the alternative culture (racism) and make our campus an inclusive and supportive environment for everyone.

First and foremost, the MSE faculty bring you a message that racism in all of its forms has no place at our university nor in our department. We are committed to ensuring and maintaining an anti-racist environment for students, staff and faculty. We further recognize that such statements are insufficient by themselves to correct department climate issues, and we therefore commit to real and significant action.

With this in mind, we have created the **MSE Anti-Racism Working Group**. This group's name reflects its core goal to identify and remediate policies and actions within the purview of the MSE department that promote and propagate racism. First, we will investigate the nature and source of racial inequality in our MSE department. These actions will include starting a potentially uncomfortable dialogue with department stakeholders (students, staff, faculty) to learn the scope of inequalities that exist in the education system as they relate to our department in order to inform and craft policies to improve upon them. Second, we will enact policies to directly promote anti-racism within the department, with the hope that they can serve as best practices for other units to adopt. The five professors and two DECADE student representatives below have volunteered for this group and we will initiate a transparent process to include additional students, postdocs, and staff interested in participating in this important effort. The goal is to have a diverse group of people who can themselves provide unique perspectives while also engaging different members of the MSE community.

A few examples of preliminary action items are included below, with varying timelines for completion. These will be revisited and updated based on upcoming conversations, with specific concrete actions defined by the MSE Anti-Racism Working Group described above.

Short-Term:

LISTEN - Community Call-Ins to learn about department climate

Provide a regular forum for community dialog and the identification of department climate issues. An anonymous call-in mechanism will be made available.

ACT - Prescribe corrective actions based on anonymous feedback mechanism

Provide a pathway for anonymous reporting of problematic behavior or important issues. Department deliverable will include a report with feedback and responsive actions on a regular basis.

Medium-Term:

LISTEN - Develop a Learning Group on implicit bias, and anti-racist ideas

Target a multi-pronged format with a combination of a book/journal club and seminar series to educate MSE about important issues in STEM. Engage political educators, people from underrepresented backgrounds, and social scientists to bring new perspectives.

ACT - Increased engagement of DECADE student leadership

Incorporate the DECADE student representatives from MSE in faculty meetings, graduate visit days, new student orientation events, Graduate Student Association (GSA) meetings and events, and other important department events.

Long-Term:

LISTEN - Provide regular training on anti-racism, allyship, and bias

Develop and require regular formal training for faculty, staff, postdocs, and students on anti-racism, implicit bias, microaggressions, allyship, and other important topics.

ACT - Address Diversity and Inclusion in Merit/Promotion cases

Although Diversity and Inclusion are already a component of faculty and staff evaluations, this group will aim to clarify the benchmarks for positive, neutral, and negative evaluations.

We look forward to working with you all to make MSE at UCI a more inclusive environment and ensuring that racist ideas, policies, etc. are rapidly identified and addressed. We plan to complete the formation of the working group team within the next two weeks, after which we will act on the above items in a timely manner. Expect regular updates about important events and actions from the working group.

Best regards,

Prof. Tim Rupert (lead)
Prof. William Bowman
Prof. Stacy Copp
Salma El-Azab
Prof. Allon Hochbaum
Nadjia Motley
Prof. Regina Ragan

for the MSE Anti-Racism Working Group

"To be antiracist is to think nothing is behaviorally wrong or right -- inferior or superior -- with any of the racial groups. Whenever the antiracist sees individuals behaving positively or negatively, the antiracist sees exactly that: individuals behaving positively or negatively, not representatives of whole races. To be antiracist is to deracialize behavior, to remove the tattooed stereotype from every racialized body. Behavior is something humans do, not races do."

How to Be An Antiracist
Ibram X. Kendi