



October 19, 2020

Dear Dean Goluboff, UVA Law administrators, and the greater UVA Law community:

We, the members of the Black Law Students Association at UVA Law, along with a coalition of our peer organizations, call for swift and holistic action to create a more inclusive and dynamic environment for current and future Black students, faculty, and staff. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of UVA BLSA's founding, we are deeply reflective of the rich history of advocacy that precedes us and the foundation on which we stand. Over this half century, UVA BLSA has led several initiatives to [increase Black student enrollment and faculty presence](#) at the law school. Our unwavering commitment to equity, inclusion, and community pushes us to revisit our previous calls for transformative initiatives and substantive change.

We find it appropriate and important to notify you of the positive changes made since our last statement:

- Renamed Withers-Brown Hall to Brown Hall in the law school
- Recruited and included a group of students in the faculty interviewing process
- Increased numbers and availability of courses that directly address or are focused on racial justice to be held during this academic year
- Created and hosted more institutionally sponsored events focused on racial justice
- Increased career service outreach, accessibility, and resources for Black and minority students

We are encouraged by this progress but acknowledge that this is by no means the end of our work. To that end, we look forward to continuing to work with the administration and the greater UVA Law community to achieve our goals.



Since first addressing the school community in our [call to action](#) this summer, we have continued to investigate the issues, meet with administrators and faculty, garner peer support, and search for solutions. After extensive research and advocacy, quite frankly we were left disappointed. Throughout these several months, two things were affirmed: (1) substantive reforms are *clearly* possible and (2) that, ultimately, it is not within our power as Black students to initiate these programs. First, although we understand that a single initiative cannot completely undo generations of racial oppression, we know that it is possible to incorporate innovative programming to erode the barriers that racism presents for Black students, faculty, and staff. Second, no matter how thorough our efforts, those who hold authority within our school community are ultimately the people who can make these changes a reality.

While we do appreciate the changes made since the start of our efforts, we recognize there is still much more to be done. As we previously mentioned, UVA Law's long and rich history also includes systems of exclusion and racial oppression. In order to rectify those ills and develop a more equitable space for all students, faculty, and staff at our shared institution, extensive investment and effort from administration and community shareholders is required to develop new programming, procedures, and cultural norms to move us in a more inclusive direction.

In hearing about these new developments, we have maintained our initial call to action and have prioritized the following items:

1. Increase targeted recruitment efforts to expand the Black applicant pool and the number of enrolled Black students.

These recruitment programs must include on-campus HBCU presentations, summer pipeline programs for Black and underrepresented students, and increased fee waiver access. Additionally, efforts should include community engagement with local high schools and middle schools through "shadow programs" and orientation programs on campus. The summer pipeline program shall be the top priority and be established by summer 2022.

2. Develop a renewable, full-tuition scholarship geared toward Black students interested in civil rights and racial justice careers.

The scholarship should be endowed and awarded to a new recipient every class. Reducing the amount of financial barriers to UVA Law allows the law school to not only expand its applicant pool, but also to increase the number of merited attendees otherwise stopped from matriculating due to financial circumstances. This scholarship should bear the name of a



former Black student dedicated to civil and human rights, i.e. Elaine R. Jones, '70. Several peer institutions have established similar initiatives to close the funding gap for those interested in civil rights and racial justice.

3. Create a teaching fellowship focused on race and legal justice in affiliation with the Center for the Study of Race and Law at UVA.

A primary barrier to a large Black faculty pool is the lack of accessible pathways into legal academia for Black scholars. Development of a fellowship provides a pipeline for aspiring Black professors to receive mentorship and build their teaching profile. Peer law schools have created similar programs (see [UCLA](#) and [Harvard](#)) that have yielded positive results. The program should be two years in length and contain a provision that participants will not be hired immediately after completion of the program, as is the norm in similar fellowships. During the fellowship, scholars will teach courses, work on their legal scholarship, and prepare application materials. This program will ensure that UVA Law students have continued access to diverse scholarship and courses and will make UVA Law a pipeline for diversity in legal academia.

4. Implement the completion of a graded course that directly addresses or is focused on racial justice as a graduation requirement.

This requirement may be satisfied by completing a course from a pre-approved list to be created and reviewed by scholars in race and the law. The administration should convene an ad-hoc committee of professors across various legal disciplines. This committee should solely consider the development of this graduation requirement. Requiring graded racial justice courses to satisfy graduation requirements exposes students to a wide array of legal problems affecting minority demographics and encourages full internalization of the material. UVA Law prides itself on graduating highly intelligent and competent future attorneys, and thus, has an obligation to prepare these graduates to serve clients and work with other lawyers in an increasingly diverse field.

5. Hire a third-party diversity consultant to address the systemic issues that led to the exodus of Black faculty and staff.

The law school must make substantive changes to actively support and retain Black faculty and staff after their initial hiring. The third-party diversity consultant should audit the law school's culture and opportunities for upward mobility for Black faculty and staff. By addressing these problems, the school will create an environment where all professors and staff can thrive at UVA.



6. Increase the number of Black faculty and administrators at the law school.

We charge the school to actively recruit Black applicants to teach within the law school across various departments of scholarship, primarily in required doctrinal courses. The law school should engage in active recruitment at fairs and search for new Black professors entering legal academia.

All future programming requires full-investment across **all** offices in the law school in collaboration with the forthcoming Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. These transformations cannot solely rest upon the shoulders of one department, but the entire community. With this renewed call to action, we once again challenge the community to push for the long-term institutional changes outlined above in the interest of creating a more inclusive environment.

We envision a UVA Law in which Black students thrive *because* they attend an institution that actively supports them, rather than *in spite* of their school experiences. In order to attain this ideal, the law school must commit its resources and efforts to ambitious and forward-looking programming, curriculum, and cultural reform. We believe that these action items will further affirm UVA Law's place as a leader in legal academia and commitment to producing well-rounded and culturally competent attorneys. We look forward to continuing to work with the administration and the community to implement the aforementioned initiatives.

Sincerely,

The Black Law Students Association at UVA Law

Signed:

Advocates for Disability Rights at UVA Law

American Constitution Society at UVA Law

Asian Pacific American Law Student Association at UVA Law

Child Advocacy Research & Education (CARE) at UVA Law

Diversity Advisory Council

Emerging Companies and Venture Capital Society

Feminist Legal Forum

Heartland 'Hoos



If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
Jewish Law Students Association (JLSA)
Journal of Law & Politics
Lambda Law Alliance at UVA Law
Latin American Law Organization at UVA Law
Law Christian Fellowship
Law, Innovation, Security & Technology Society
Middle Eastern and North African Law Student Association
Muslim Law Students Association at UVA Law
National Lawyers Guild at UVA
OWLS at UVA Law
Public Interest Law Association
South Asian Law Students Association
Student Bar Association at UVA Law
Student Legal Forum
The Domestic Violence Project
The Executive Board of Virginia Law First Generation Professionals
The Libel Show
UVA JD-MBA Society
UVA Law Mock Trial
Virginia Employment and Labor Law Association
Virginia Environmental Law Forum
Virginia Environmental Law Journal
Virginia Journal of Criminal Law
Virginia Journal of International Law
Virginia Journal of Law & Technology (VJOLT)
Virginia Journal of Social Policy & the Law
Virginia Law & Business Review
Virginia Law Democrats
Virginia Law Prison Project
Virginia Law Review
Virginia Law Veterans
Virginia Law Weekly
Virginia Law Women
Virginia Sports & Entertainment Law Journal
Virginia Tax Review
Women of Color