Dear Adams School of Dentistry Community,

As you have likely seen from the news and media outlets today, a jury reached a verdict for former officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd last May. This trial has been a reminder of the difficulties we have all endured this year: the stress of a global pandemic, senseless acts of violence toward the Black, Asian-American, and other disproportionally targeted racial groups and communities.

The guilty verdict and conviction rendered today brings a conclusion to this individual case, but we know that considerable work remains in the fight against injustice. In similar events spanning more than a year, and in the months since, we have reckoned with the reality of years of adversity and anguish within our Black and African American community.

We acknowledge and appreciate that there are many members of our community at the Adams School of Dentistry who are likely feeling frustration and grief at the continued pain and suffering of the Black and African American people in our country. We not only share in these emotions with you as colleagues and friends, but we stand in solidarity with you on our own journeys to adopt an anti-racist mindset and end racial injustice.

As part of our efforts at the Adams School of Dentistry, we are planning to form peer support pods – that will initiate within the Inclusive Excellence Committee. These pods will meet on a regular basis and discuss topics of interest, beginning with racial and social justice. We hope our community will continue to take advantage of the DOCSpeaks presentations, and other initiatives from the Office of Inclusive Excellence, to learn more about these issues and how they affect the people we treat, our colleagues and our oral healthcare community.

As always, you have resources at the school and at the University that you are welcome to use for support. Students may contact the school's Director of Student Wellness, Kate Thieda, for a 1:1 appointment, or the University's Dean of Students team, the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) or Student Wellness. CAPS also facilitates the Multicultural Health Program, including counseling and events for the Black, Indigenous and People of Color community. Employees are encouraged to utilize the Employee Assistance Program or access these resources.

Lastly, today's verdict will undoubtedly prompt strong emotions in each of us, in those we work with and learn alongside, and in our patients. Please remember to share a spirit of empathy and grace with both our colleagues and patients.

We have much work to do, but we are committed to doing this work with each of you as we build an inclusive and equitable community together and advocate for lasting change. Thank you all for all you do to care for each other.

Sincerely,

Julie Byerley, MD, MPH  
Interim Dean

Sylvia A. Frazier-Bowers, DDS, PhD  
Assistant Dean for Inclusive Excellence and Equity Initiatives