STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FROM THE COLLEGE OF FORESTRY

As we witness the ongoing struggle for justice in the streets and legislatures across this country, we are called to confront the beliefs, practices and systems that have led to the tragic deaths of Black citizens such as Trayvon Martin, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and numerous others over many years and across our nation. We must speak and act now so we can work tirelessly to dismantle the system of institutionalized racism that robs our Black neighbors and colleagues of safety, opportunity and prosperity. In doing so, we must acknowledge the painful truth that many of us have benefited from privilege afforded to white people at the expense of People of Color and Indigenous peoples.

Acknowledging this truth, we must commit to engaging in action that will change this direction for our current colleagues and students to set generations to come on a different course. The Black Lives Matter movement and the recent protests in our state and across the nation have been led by dedicated individuals who are willing to take significant risks to advance the cause of justice. It is incumbent on us to join with them in this struggle and enact change in our sphere of academia, which has long maintained barriers that effectively shut out those we did not grant arbitrary privilege. Now and in the future, we need to stand in active support of our colleagues who are Black, Indigenous and people of color. We need to call out injustice and do all that we can to amplify their voices as they demand the equitable society to which they are entitled. We must also vehemently reject the efforts to portray these demands as the unreasonable agenda of radicalism rather than an accurate and appropriate response to our country's troubled state.

Our actions must be well-informed, impactful and sustained. To this end, the CoF senior leadership team and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion workgroup are working together to ensure shared implementation of the College's DEI strategic plan. Sporadic activity will not be sufficient. To create real change, the College of Forestry is committed to the following:

1. We will listen. We are creating ongoing opportunities for members of our community of color and other underrepresented groups to share their suggestions and concerns directly with College of Forestry leadership and peers.
2. We have committed resources through a scholarship program to broaden faculty and staff participation in educational programming and public service related to addressing oppression and privilege. Funds are available for ten individuals to participate in a local, national or international DEI-focused workshop, conference, or other learning opportunities.
3. In June 2020, we initiated a program to provide any member of the College who requests one with a copy of any anti-racist book that would help them engage in undoing white supremacy. To date, we have delivered over 125 books.
4. We will mandate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion activity and impact be a component of all annual evaluations of faculty and staff.
5. We have commissioned three college task forces to achieve specific goals in these areas: providing DEI best practice in recruitment, hiring and training; developing a workshop to support faculty and graduate students in including diverse content in their curricula; delivering a plan for engagement that reaches across units to build an intentionally inclusive community that emphasizes our diversity.
6. We will re-evaluate, with an emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, our undergraduate and graduate scholarship processes to ensure they align with the values and principles of the College.

7. We will identify, value and celebrate the achievements of people of color, who have struggled against these same systems of oppression, and who, despite those challenges, have achieved remarkable feats in scholarship, learning and impact on our world.

Through these actions, and others to come, we will change our support for the just treatment of our communities of color from implicit to explicit. We will confront our history as a nation, state, institution and profession, and have the difficult conversations necessary to reach a new understanding of the barriers that have oppressed Black, Indigenous and communities of color for so long. Equipped with that knowledge, we will strive for real advances that will redress the wrongs of the past, provide open access to opportunities to all who seek it, and make the College of Forestry a truly equitable and inclusive place to work and learn.

Tom DeLuca,
Cheryl Ramberg-Ford and Allyn C. Ford Dean

College of Forestry