Dear Mount Sinai Research Community,

We are writing to urge everyone to observe #ShutDownSTEM tomorrow, June 10. This is a broad nationwide effort “to eradicate anti-Black racism,” recognizing that all of us—from Dean and professor to postdoc and student to staff and volunteer—have “an enormous ethical obligation to stop doing ‘business as usual’ ... and create a just, equitable and inclusive STEM field.”

The field of biomedical sciences has not lived up to its own standards of diversity and inclusion. The number of Black students enrolled in biomedical PhD programs in the U.S. has remained roughly flat, from 6% to 7% from 2006 to 2016, and the number in postdoctoral fellowships is smaller still. Those who do complete such programs leave the field at higher rates such that the paltry number of Black faculty within the basic science enterprises of U.S. medical schools is a national embarrassment.

Mount Sinai is committed to doing better. We will do better. We will demonstrate several years from now that we did do better. This is our near- and long-term plan:
- We will continue to improve the representation of Black students in our graduate programs, building on tangible success in recent years.
- We will invest further in recruiting Black postdoctoral fellows to our basic research labs.
- We will recruit Black faculty to our basic sciences.
- We will continue to strive for a climate and atmosphere on campus that is maximally inclusive and comfortable for all.
- We will continue to educate ourselves and others to conquer racism and bias head on.
- And we will collect the data to demonstrate progress.

In the short-term, locally, tomorrow, we urge everyone to reflect on the past, why we have not made more progress over the last five and a half decades since passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Law despite a lot of talk, and how we can finally do better moving forward. We hope you all will join us in contemplating how each of us can do better; how we all can do better together. All classroom work will be cancelled on Wednesday so that everyone is free to participate in a range of local and online programs or in self-reflection and healing. We want all other group meetings that take place on Wednesday to start by acknowledging the task ahead of us. Everyone should set aside time tomorrow to consider these core issues as we will be doing.

Sudip Parikh, PhD, CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, wrote yesterday: “As we plan for the actions to ensure this moment does not slip away, it’s time for us to pause, listen, and reflect on how—as an organization, as members of the scientific community, and as members of our broader communities—we can and must be a powerful force for change.”

Please help us make Mount Sinai a leader in showing the way toward ending racism and bias and achieving true equity in biomedicine.

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