

## **Statement in support of efforts to decriminalize the University of Washington by the School of Aquatic & Fishery Sciences (SAFS) Equity & Inclusion Committee**

The SAFS Equity & Inclusion Committee joins other schools<sup>1</sup>, committees, unions, and individuals at the UW and nationwide in the call for rethinking public safety and security, particularly in the Movement for Black Lives.

We strive for a safe environment where Black students, staff and faculty are relieved from any burdens and life-and-death issues stemming from police violence that can result in fear, anxiety, depression, anger, helplessness, and physical harm.

We recognize that Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people experience excessive force and are more likely to be killed by the police than their white peers ([Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race–ethnicity, and sex](#)). We support changes in human resources policies, procedures, and training to reduce systemic racism, but we also think that changes at a broader and deeper level are needed.

Given the history of the Seattle Police Department having a pattern of excessive and unconstitutional force, and last year's [external review](#) of the UW Police Department (UWPD), it is important to reconsider how power is organized and how resources are distributed.

We are in support of the ongoing commitments to reduce existing racial inequities, and ask that these changes are followed through. The requests, similar to those stated in the [Decriminalizing UW petition](#) and those in the Class C [resolution](#) regarding UW divestment from local law enforcement agencies by the UW Faculty Senate Executive Committee, that we support are:

related to law enforcement agencies external to UWPD:

1. Commit to not handing over people detained by UWPD to external law enforcement agencies
2. Commit to not using local law enforcement for additional security for any events, including sports games and ceremonies
3. Not allow the use of any campus location as a training location for local law enforcement agencies such as the Washington State Patrol, Seattle Police Department, and King County Sheriff

and related to UWPD:

1. Disarm officers of the UWPD of firearms
2. Replace using law enforcement approaches with novel approaches to respond to public safety needs, including referrals for welfare checks under the Safe Campus program

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<sup>1</sup> Other schools include the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, the Department of Political Science, the Department of American Indian Studies, and the UW Department of Global Health

3. Ban the use of police dogs (other than explosive detection dogs), which many communities of color in the US associate with the terror of state violence
4. Not hire former police officers with disciplinary records as UW police officers, and
5. Maintain rather than decrease police accountability related to ethics, force, sexual assault, and other serious violations.

We are pleased to read in the [letter](#) by President Ana Mari Cauce and Vice President for Student Life Denzil J. Suite, addressed to the Black Student Union, the Graduate and Professional Student Leadership, the ASUW Leadership, and the Faculty Senate, dated June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020, that:

- with regards to UWPD “working with and, when necessary, detaining individuals on our campus who engage in crimes against our campus community”, “[the UW has] not and will not transfer detained individuals to the custody of Seattle Police Department, nor will [they] transport individuals on their behalf”
- there is a commitment “to not hiring any former police officers with disciplinary records related to ethics, use of force, violence, bias, and any other serious violations”,
- “starting this summer, [there will be consultation] with Safe Campus and mental health professionals to devise mechanisms to reduce the need for officers to visit those who may be in crisis”,
- “in the fall, [there will be a program] to respond to requests for services and activities where an armed officer is not needed, things such as escorts and other activities”, and
- “rather than establishing task forces as temporary structures, [they] want to ensure this work is integrated and prioritized into our existing governance, so it remains a strong focus of our campus work not just now, but permanently.”

We ask that the UW follows through with these commitments, discussions, creation of new/revised programs and policies.

In light of the [Conversation](#) for the University of Washington Community, hosted by the UW Faculty Council on Multicultural Affairs on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 about “Disarming & Defunding UW Police: What Does That Look Like?”, we encourage students, staff and faculty to be part of ongoing conversations. How is racism a threat to public health? What violence and injustices are occurring at the hand of authority figures and why? What are possible concrete steps now and in the next few years? The university is a space of learning and intellectual inquiry. We thus have a responsibility to make the space safe and nurturing: as a learning environment for all students and as a supportive environment for all staff and faculty.

The SAFS Equity & Inclusion Committee joins other academic institutions across the nation in inviting their leadership to bolster the movement to protect our Black community members, demilitarize our communities, and re-prioritize public resources from incarceration towards health and education.

Approved by vote of the SAFS Equity & Inclusion Committee