

Statement of Solidarity with Black Lives Matter

The recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Rayshard Brooks, Elijah McClain, Atatiana Jefferson, Sandra Bland, Ahmaud Arbery and so many others are the latest manifestations of a long history of white supremacy and racist state violence in the United States. We, the Organizing Committee of United Academics of Oregon State University, condemn the racist, white supremacist violence that terrorizes Black communities nationwide, and we grieve the many lives it has taken. We acknowledge that the [long history of white supremacy in Oregon](#) and the presence of [white supremacists in our community](#), on and off campus, present real dangers to Black students, staff, and faculty, as well as to other people of color, as [explained by Walidah Imrasha](#) in 2014.

We also recognize that our own university is deeply complicit in maintaining and perpetuating white supremacy by occupying indigenous land, policing our campus and community, failing to require anti-racism education and training, and dismissing social justice labors while perpetually rewarding those who ignore this work. As evidenced in OSU's [2019 report](#) on equity, inclusion, and social justice, Black, Latinx, indigenous and other minoritized faculty and students face multiple barriers of entry at our university, and do not find supportive, hospitable conditions for their retention, professional growth, and advancement.

We remember that in fall 2019, a Black OSU student [was assaulted and arrested](#) by an Oregon State Police officer near campus. The process of institutional response has since alienated that same student along with other students of color.

Now OSU prepares to [spend millions of dollars to establish its own armed police force](#) despite growing recognition that university and college police forces have historically been responsible for the [killing](#), harassment, and [racial profiling](#) of Black students, staff, faculty, and [community members](#) around this country. This includes the [murder of Jason Washington](#) by Portland State University campus police in 2018. The history of policing in the United States illustrates the emphasis on social control rather than control of crime. Policing institutions in the U.S. have actively resisted self-examination, and are primed to use excessive force with a legacy and contemporary culture of militarized racism that is at odds with democratic values.

To make serious progress in dismantling structures of white supremacy and ending our university's complicity in racist state-sanctioned policing violence, **we call upon OSU President F. King Alexander, the Board of Trustees, and administrators to heed and agree to the demands of the #DisarmOSU and #WeCanDoTheWork campaigns.** The administration must act on these demands and *invest* in programs that make OSU a safe and nurturing place for Black students, faculty and staff. Above all, the OSU administration and Board of Trustees must listen and hold themselves accountable to the investments demanded by faculty and students who have been criminalized and brutalized by police and other law enforcement agencies.

We make this call as part of our on-going support for the Movement for Black Lives. Activists and scholars associated with the [Black Lives Matter](#) Movement, through the [Movement for](#)

[Black Lives Platform](#), [#DefundPolice](#), [#PoliceFreeCampus](#), and [other campaigns](#), offer a compelling moral and practical case that divesting from policing as we know it, and investing instead in people, is a necessary step toward dismantling white supremacy and creating a safer society for all of us. As organizer and scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore says, “[when Black lives matter, everyone lives better](#).” We must heed this call.

University administrators began to expand campus police forces as a response to widespread student protest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The growth in size and authority of campus police forces is part of a broader expansion of American law enforcement in recent decades.

Yet [campus police do little to make our campuses safer](#). In fact, [they make them less safe](#) for students, staff, faculty, and community members of color. Furthermore, [they have proven to be ineffective in](#), and often a barrier to, combatting the most common crimes on college campuses: gender-based violence, sexual assault, and rape.

Successful sexual assault prevention interventions do not rely on police: the [Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act](#) program significantly reduced sexual assault and rape mythology among students at 3 Canadian universities over two years, and requires no police presence to implement. Instead, these programs work to change the culture and behavior of all who work and study on college campuses. To effectively address crimes of sexual assault, OSU should reinvest in programs that seek to change our campus culture, such as those at OSU’s Survivor Advocacy and Resource Center ([SARC](#)). While these programs require critical review to ensure that they genuinely serve our communities, especially communities of color, the evidence is clear we should invest in them rather than policing to address the most common crimes on our campus.

As faculty, we are committed to creating equitable and just working conditions by opposing racist policies and practices at our university and within the broader labor movement to which we belong. Our role as educators is to continue amplifying dialogues and evidence about how to achieve safety and justice without policing at our university and in our community.

To that end, the Organizing Committee of UAOSU, our faculty union, joins with other [labor unions](#) and [councils](#), including the [Coalition of Graduate Employees](#) at Oregon State University and the [United Academics of the University of Oregon](#), and calls on the AFL-CIO to disaffiliate police unions. The protections afforded by police unions [increase the use of force and decrease accountability](#), directly contributing to the conditions that make our campuses and communities unsafe places for Black students, faculty, and staff, and for other people of color.

Our work as faculty will not end with making this statement. Faculty members hold a number of privileges, resources, and tools, and we are obligated to use them to promote justice and oppose injustice. Our support for the demands of the [#WeCanDoTheWork](#) and [#DisarmOSU](#) campaigns is a call to action for *all of us* to create, participate in, invest in, and be accountable to a [vision of a different society](#), one grounded in dignity, care, and justice, not the racism of prisons and policing. As faculty, we can and will do this work.