Dear School of Education Students, Faculty, and Staff,

The tragic and senseless death of George Floyd and so many others before him reminds us that racism in the United States is a disease with a long and uninterrupted history going back to 1619 and the arrival of the first slaves in the Jamestown colony. This disease is more virulent than the current COVID-19 pandemic and is at the heart of why this pandemic has taken a dipropionate toll on communities of people of color. Racial inequalities are also baked into our institutions of higher education and the P-12 education system. Education cannot and must not be neutral in the face of institutional and systemic racism, not only in the extreme and violent examples of brutality in our society, but also in the more insidious structures and everyday practices that reproduce inequity and maintain the status-quo in our educational institutions.

I write to assure our students, faculty, and staff of color that the School of Education stands in solidarity with you and your families against acts of racism, discrimination, and injustice. At this crucial moment, I call on the entire faculty, staff, and student body of the School of Education to join our education community in holding the pain and tension of the current moment—and America’s four-hundred year history of racism leading up to this moment—and in embracing a willingness to be agents of change by engaging each day in meaningful actions that are aligned with our shared values of promoting Equity, Excellence, and Ethics in urban schools and communities. This will mean that as a School of Education we commit to the serious work we have begun to address racism, intersectionality, and social justice. As educators, educational researchers, future teachers, counselor educators, school psychologists, and educational leaders we must engage in daily practices that hold the possibility of promoting a more equitable, inclusive, and just society. I’d like to ask that we build safe spaces and time into our classes and meetings for faculty and students to talk about racism, white privilege, and the social unrest we are currently experiencing and to listen to each other with intentionality.

In closing, I issue two challenges for your contemplation and follow-up action:

• What will you do in the next days, weeks, and months to advance these critical conversations?
• What will you do in the next days, weeks, and months to promote racial healing within yourself, your family, and your community?

In service and deep respect,
Craig A. Michaels
Dean, School of Education