



# RUTGERS

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of Planning and Public Policy

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Dear Bloustein community,

We are all concerned and saddened by what is happening across the U.S. The deep sense of pain and loss, and the anger and anguish upon seeing what communities are experiencing, have left many feeling helpless. The disparate impact of COVID-19 and ongoing police brutality has imposed unimaginable losses on our communities of color.

I join millions of others in reflecting on the lives of those who have been taken from us too soon, and for their families and loved ones. We recognize the deaths of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and others.

The Bloustein School needs to be at the forefront of discussions and actions to bring positive social and economic change, and ensure that public and private decisions are socially-just. We have a responsibility to call out practices and policies that lead to the persistence of systemic racism.

Racism has no place in the Bloustein School, at Rutgers University or in our society. Nor does indifference to these acts of violence. We must all stand up for our colleagues and fellow students of color. Go outside your community and ask how you, a health professional, or a planner, or an analytics specialist, or someone in policy or public service, can respond to the horrific displays of racism we have witnessed and ensure that the enormous toll that COVID-19 has taken on communities of color is not repeated.

The Bloustein School's Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Task Force is responsible for advising on strategies to increase the awareness of, and help promote a positive environment towards, diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging. I cannot think of a more critical time for the Task Force to be active and I am very excited about all that I will be learning from their work.

I encourage you to listen to the [recent EJB Talks podcast with Dr. Dawne Mouzon](#), who specializes in health disparities across vulnerable populations. Dr. Mouzon sheds light on why some populations, particularly black Americans and Latinos, are more susceptible to infection.

Our school is home to individuals from many different cultures, races, nationalities, identities, life experiences, beliefs, and values. I want to reaffirm our values – that the Bloustein School continually aspires to be a warm and welcoming place for all, that we will continue to strive to take care of each other, and most of all, that hatred and racial injustice has no place here.

Rutgers University offers counseling services to help our community during difficult times, despite our physical distance. Students may contact our [CAPS](#) program or [UBHC](#) for support. Faculty and staff may reach out to the [Rutgers Faculty and Staff Assistance Program](#) (FSAP).

Thank you, and stay healthy and safe.

Prof. Piyushimita (Vonu) Thakuria, PhD  
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