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October 7, 2020

Dear Members of the NTID Alumni Association Board,

Thank you for the open letter you submitted on July 29, 2020, in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Like you and the NTID alumni you represent, members of NTID's Administrative Council (NAC) and I stand against discrimination, inequity, injustice, and hate.

As you know, in June 2020, I announced that the NAC would be drafting an [Antiracism and Social Justice Plan](#) for NTID. We shared that plan with the NTIDAA Board and other members of the NTID community in September and have been collecting feedback. We will release a final version of the plan in mid-October after all feedback has been collected and the plan revised accordingly. It's important to note that the plan will continue to be a work in progress. We will continue to update and refine it based on feedback from the community as we move forward.

Action and change are at the heart of NTID's Antiracism and Social Justice Plan, and as you know from reviewing the plan and providing your feedback on it, the plan addresses many of the recommendations in your open letter. In the interest of transparency, however, I am providing a response here to each of your recommendations as you requested that I provide by today, October 7.

**Recommendation #1:**

Revisit NTID's search committees and hiring practices to ensure that NTID BIPOC personnel are represented at all levels in NTID's administration, faculty, and staff. Also NTID should actively seek out candidates with a demonstrated track record and values of advocacy for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and a commitment to building a campus that serves the diverse population at NTID at RIT.

**Response to Recommendation #1:**

NTID's Antiracism and Social Justice Plan calls for increasing representation of ALANA faculty and staff to 20%, and we have identified 13 action steps to achieve this goal. I will not list all of them here since you already have reviewed the plan and can access it again on the website, but I will point out that one of the action steps directly addresses your recommendation: consult with the RIT Human Resources Department to review [hiring processes and practices](#) to ensure progress towards the 2025 ALANA faculty and staff goal is being made, and reaffirm importance of NTID faculty and staff applicants' commitment to serving a diverse student community in the hiring process.

**Recommendation #2:**

Evaluate existing campus Public Safety officers and staff training on communicating with NTID BIPOC individuals. Review Public Safety response and de-escalation protocol to mitigate trends of racism/bias toward NTID BIPOC individuals.

**Response to Recommendation #2:**

While NTID does not have direct responsibility for or oversight of Public Safety, we included in our Antiracism and Social Justice Plan an action step that calls for working with RIT and Public Safety to provide enhanced training on working effectively with deaf ALANA members of the RIT/NTID community. In addition, because law enforcement is often called to scenes that involve mental and/or emotional health issues for which they may not be adequately trained, we will review the support already provided from Student Affairs for such calls and consider necessary modifications.

In addition, we will work to arrange a meeting with Gary Moxley, director of RIT Public Safety, and the NTIDAA Board, so Gary can explain and illuminate current Public Safety process, procedures and training.

I also should note that RIT is in the process of developing an antiracism and social justice plan for the greater university, and a review of Public Safety processes, procedures and training is being considered as part of that plan.

**Recommendation #3:**

Educate all responsible parties involved in deciding judicial matters in student conduct cases on racism and bias towards NTID BIPOC students, including but not limited to: The Ombuds office, Public Safety, Student Conduct, Title IX, and Residence Life. Implement changes to training frameworks to mitigate biases by:

- Inspecting and identifying oversight policies and procedures for student conduct hearings for any bias/double standards;
- Instituting safeguards needed for NTID BIPOC student, staff, and faculty whistleblowers such as having access to an advocate;
- Ensuring that Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf Disabled, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened students are taken into consideration as well.

**Response to Recommendation #3:**

NTID does not have direct responsibility for or oversight of the Ombuds Office, Public Safety, Student Conduct, Title IX, or Residence Life, but as Dr. Jenkins has shared in meetings with the NTIDAA Board, RIT is developing a university-wide antiracism and social justice plan based on recommendations received from the RIT Community. NTID's plan will be a part of the overall university effort and will involve a review by the RIT governance groups and Board of Trustees in the coming months. The recommendations submitted by the NTIDAA Board have been reviewed by President Munson and Dr. Jenkins, in addition to the NAC.

During the university-wide dialogue on racism, a number of recommendations related to AALANA student concerns with campus services were raised, including the areas identified by the NTIDAA Board. RIT is now in the process of engaging vice presidents responsible for these areas, under the leadership of Dr. Jenkins, in reviewing these concerns and coming up with a specific action plan to address them. The RIT Board of Trustees will be reviewing the university-wide planning effort at its November 2020 meeting. Dr. Jenkins has been charged with leading the overall university effort and has

engaged colleagues in the RIT Division of Diversity and Inclusion (including Dr. Alesia Allen from NTID who has dual reporting relationship) in developing action plans for addressing the concerns raised. Dr. Jenkins will be updating the RIT community on progress at the university level, and Dr. Allen will be updating the NTID community in similar fashion.

I also will point out that, as noted in NTID's Antiracism and Social Justice Plan, RIT has committed to upgrading its bias reporting system as announced in July 2020 by President Munson. These reports are sent to Dr. Jenkins for faculty/staff and to Dr. Sandy Johnson, senior vice president of student affairs, for students, and Drs. Jenkins and Johnson are responsible for determining appropriate follow-up actions.

**Recommendation #4:**

Place a greater emphasis on cross-cultural communication and comprehension. This can be accomplished with course content and structure that focuses on race relations and intercultural communications. Determine the best way to integrate these courses into the academic curriculum in ASL format for all students.

**Response to Recommendation #4:**

NTID's Antiracism and Social Justice Plan includes working with RIT to implement a requirement that all incoming NTID students participate in an antiracism program as part of first year experience. Our plan also calls for updating our curriculum to include courses related to antiracism and social justice for NTID students at all degree levels and for exploring establishment of a certificate program in the area of equity and social justice.

**Recommendation #5:**

Incorporate current and relevant topics that include but are not limited to: intercultural communication, unconscious bias, anti-black bias, privilege, and racism in NTID's permanent Professional Development Program training curriculum for administrators, staff and faculty.

**Response to Recommendation #5:**

NTID's Antiracism and Social Justice Plan includes community education and training to support ALANA members of our community, including working with the RIT Division of Diversity and Inclusion to identify specific diversity and anti-bias training that will be required for all administrators, faculty and staff at NTID to complete as part of their professional development plan. NTID will take full advantage of the robust array of programs and training offered by the RIT Division of Diversity and Inclusion. (See examples on their website: <https://www.rit.edu/diversity/>.)

**Recommendation #6:**

Identify external counseling organizations that specialize in addressing various themes of oppression and ask them to assess NTID's Counseling Department's capacity to meet students' needs.

**Response to Recommendation #6:**

As noted above, NTID's Antiracism and Social Justice Plan includes community education and training to support our ALANA community, including working with the RIT Division of Diversity and Inclusion to identify specific diversity and anti-bias training that will be required for all administrators, faculty and staff at NTID to complete as part of their professional development plan, and this will include staff and administrators in our counseling department.

In addition, over the past several years, we have experienced significant turnover in NTID's counseling department, due mostly to retirement. This provided us with a wonderful opportunity to increase

diversity in this critical student-focused area. In fact, 40% of NTID's current counselors/academic advisors are ALANA.

**Recommendation #7:**

Provide a budget to bring relevant subject matter experts to create year-round safe forums for students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Incorporate topics that spark continual community reflection and results-driven dialogue on themes of systemic racism and intercultural dynamics where participants can candidly discuss changes they wish to see at NTID.

**Response to Recommendation #7:**

While the NTID Office of Diversity and Inclusion already has a budget for this type of programming, and Dr. Alesia Allen, assistant vice president for NTID diversity, equity and inclusion, is developing plans in this area, NTID will be increasing the annual operating budget for the NTID Office of Diversity and Inclusion to address initiatives outlined in the NTID Antiracism and Social Justice Plan, and Dr. Allen will be reporting regularly to the NTID community regarding the efforts of her office, including in the area of programming and events for the community.

**Recommendation #8:**

Encourage RIT to institute Juneteenth (June 19th) as a recognized campus holiday.

**Response to Recommendation #8:**

NTID has made this recommendation to RIT.

**Recommendation #9:**

Designate NTID BIPOC and non-BIPOC "Diversity & Inclusion Leads" in each of NTID's student and academic divisions to carry out NTID's diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies (i.e. NTID Center on Employment, NTID Student and Academic Services, Student Life Team, Academic Departments, etc). These leads should aid in providing a clear visual roadmap of how NTID's employees can engage in dismantling racism, anti-blackness, and other relevant themes. In addition to these leads, the working groups should also consider including outside BIPOC Deaf representatives as well.

**Response to Recommendation #9:**

Dr. Alesia Allen is establishing an internal advisory network group that will do the work you're recommending. Dr. Allen also will be providing regular updates to the community regarding progress made related to the action steps in NTID's Antiracism and Social Justice Plan.

NTID is presently in the process of identifying specific timelines for each action step in our plan along with identifying specifically who is responsible for oversight of each action. At the request of NTID AALANA student leaders, we have extended the timeline for student feedback on the plan until October 15 at which time we will move forward with finalizing the plan and identifying specific timelines and responsibilities. These will be posted on the NTID Diversity and Inclusion website and updated regularly by Dr. Allen. It is important to point out that RIT as well as NTID has moved forward in responding to a number of concerns raised. Progress on these efforts will be reported by both Dr. Jenkins and Dr. Allen and shared publicly on the RIT and NTID Diversity and Inclusion websites. Dr. Jenkins, Dr. Allen and I also look forward to our scheduled meeting with the NTIDAA Board on October 23 to further discuss the plan and its implementation.

Thank you, again, for your recommendations and for recognizing that this work requires on-going commitment and support from everyone in our community. We are grateful to have the support of the NTIDAA Board and our 9,000+ alumni. We all want RIT and NTID to be better, stronger and more welcoming of all people. Together, we will make meaningful and lasting change.

Yours in Tiger pride,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerard J. Buckley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Gerry Buckley  
NTID President  
RIT Vice President and Dean