

August 20, 2020

Dear COPH Students, Staff, and Faculty –

As we commence a new academic year and another pandemic semester, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our faculty, staff and students at the College of Public Health – both returning and new! We anticipate another great year of having public health impact in our communities while we teach the public health leaders of tomorrow and conduct the research that that will shape the health of the public in the future. We look forward to exploring our mission to make Nebraska the healthiest state in the union as a model of our work across the country and around the world. And, I am reminded, that there was never a better time to be in public health than today. What you do matters.

Over the summer, following the Black Lives Matters protests, you requested an initiative to not just refine our racism and equity work in our communities while we declare racism a public health emergency but to take a hard look at ourselves, the College and our own University. We currently have 10 active groups that are developing and implementing strategies between now and the end of 2020; you have been invited to join. One of my paramount priorities as Dean is to foster an inclusive and diverse environment in which all members of our community feel welcomed and respected and can succeed. While this may sound noble, it is pragmatic. The College of public health does not sell widgets so the faculty, staff, and students are our greatest assets. As a public health community, our collective action is paramount as we combat the impact of racism and health inequalities plaguing our communities in Nebraska and across the globe.

In reverence to our summer of unrest, the College will be holding a virtual kneel down for equity during the first week of school. The kneel down will consist of a series of activities during the week. The attached image has been developed and will be used on the home page of Canvas, our web site, and on the screens throughout the building. In addition, I would encourage everyone to integrate this image into any other communications vehicles you deem appropriate, including Zoom backgrounds, PowerPoint slides, emails, etc.

As members of a privileged class and intellectual community, we have a responsibility to take a stand for anti-racism and equity. I hope that you will join me in this virtual kneel down and take advantage of the opportunities to engage in the anti-racism and equity discussion starting with ourselves.

Always listening and learning,

ask



Ali S. Khan, MD, MPH

Retired Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS

Dean and Professor

College of Public Health | Office of the Dean