

Dear Lawrence Conservatory Community,

My admiration for you transcends words. The global pandemic dispersed our conservatory community across the nation and across the globe. The array of challenges you have had to deal with as you maintained your musical and academic studies is staggering. Anxiety, grief, worry, concern, confusion, anger, hope, and exhaustion are just a few of the words the students in our Deep Listening class used to describe how they were feeling in week 8.

Then the killing of George Floyd at the hands of the police, coming after the killings of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, sparked an outrage that this country and the world has rarely seen. Despite everything you had already been through, you rose up, joined protests, lifted your voices against racism, and placed yourselves in dangerous situations, even as you continued to finish the term. As I said before, my admiration for you transcends words. You inspire me and give me hope for our future. Thank you.

Police brutality, a disregard for Black lives, and the pervasive and systemic legacy of racism in America must end. I have spent the last weeks reflecting upon my place in this terrible history. As a privileged white male, I am ashamed to say that I have not done nearly enough to actively dismantle racism. I am making a personal commitment to do better and work harder to become an active force for positive change. I am holding space to listen. I am taking time to learn. I am making space to act. I encourage my white friends and colleagues to do the same.

This personal action is critical, but there also is a need for institutional action. President Burstein in his recent communication entitled "Safety for All," makes clear Lawrence's commitment to find "ways to fortify our own house, our campus community, to ensure we are a force for anti-racism, equity, and safety for all." The Lawrence Conservatory of Music wholly embraces this call to action and will strive to become a force to dismantle racism and to create a Conservatory where voices, perspectives and musical traditions that are non-white, non-male, and non-Western are included, taught, uplifted, and valued.

The task in front of us is complex, difficult, and extremely challenging. Symbolic gestures are not enough. We must work to change the very DNA of our Conservatory and to strive to set the standard for creating an inclusive, equitable, safe and actively anti-racist institution. We all must play a role for this change to be successful. I know we are up to this task.

In my position as Dean, I will lead this change process and keep it an institutional priority. I will hold institutional space for listening. I will provide institutional resources for learning. I will engage every member of my faculty and staff, along with students in this critical work, and empower them to act boldly.

Our initial commitments including continuing and expanding efforts to:

- Create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for our Black and Brown students, faculty, and staff.
- Recruit and welcome an increasing number of Black and Brown students to our Conservatory.
- Hire more Black and Brown faculty.
- Change our core curriculum to include and celebrate more Black and Brown creators, performers, and music traditions.

- Program more Black and Brown composers in our Conservatory performances, and feature more Black and Brown artists in our visiting artists programs.
- Train future music educators in ways that will normalize diverse musical practices and promote inclusive pedagogies that empower young Black and Brown music-makers while dismantling racist stereotypes in our public school classrooms.
- Support commissioning projects so faculty and students can partner with living Black and Brown composers to add new works to the repertoire.
- Create a prominent page on our website that highlights resources to find works by under-represented composers to empower both faculty and students to diversify their repertoire.

This week I have also asked every faculty member to make specific and measurable short term and long term commitments that they can implement in their studios, classes, ensembles and broader musical community starting in the fall. I am also asking each department to do the same on a larger scale.

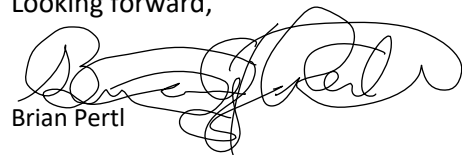
In the coming two weeks, I will hold Zoom brainstorming/listening sessions for current conservatory students, for alumni, and for faculty. I am confident that these sessions will generate new ideas and clarify the most beneficial way forward for both the short term and the long term.

We will clarify our commitments and initiatives over the summer using the initial feedback from these sessions. We have always done our best work together, as a community, working toward a shared vision. Although I am deeply proud of the work we have already done over the past years in many of these areas, we still have a long way to go. I will send an update later this summer that more clearly outlines our plan of action.

I invite you all to be a part of this important process. Please look out for Zoom Meetings to be scheduled in the coming weeks. If you are not at a place where you can engage with this work right now, there will be ample opportunities to participate in the future.

As the fight against the pervasive racism in this country continues, I encourage you to find space to rest, recover, and replenish yourself for the hard work ahead. Leila and I are always here for you. Each of our faculty and staff are here for you. All of the resources of our University are here for you. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

Looking forward,



Brian Pertl

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