Dear Marine BIPOC team,

We, as representatives of the Department of Oceanography, appreciate that you have been forthright about challenges surrounding diversity in our programs and department. You have done a great service to our department by so clearly articulating what some of these challenges are, and by proposing ideas for how we can address them. We agree that our department has not moved quickly enough on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We acknowledge the longstanding lack of diversity that exists among the faculty of our department. We share the dedication to actively work together in partnership to change our culture and practice. We are committed to facilitating substantive change that directly addresses your concerns and demands.

This moment, catalyzed by your letter, can be an inflection in the trajectory of our department—one that will lead to a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, welcoming and supportive environment for present and future students, postdoctoral researchers, staff, faculty, researchers, and visitors.

As we move forward toward a more welcoming and supportive environment, we must all stand together in unity against racism in any form.

**Direct responses to your Demands**

As requested, we commit to the establishment of an Interim Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (IDEI) committee, made up of staff, students, faculty, and researchers within the Department of Oceanography. This committee should include at least one person who has training and experience with DEI work, and at least one member of the Marine BIPOC team. It is likely that the individual with training and experience with DEI work will come from a unit outside of the department. We understand that the Marine BIPOC team’s recommendations on the structure and membership of this committee are in progress and will be available upon request. We look forward to engaging with the Marine BIPOC team in the formation of this committee, and to receiving the team’s recommendations when they are ready.

A key role of the IDEI committee will be to raise funds to support a full-time staff position, as requested, designated to help our department become more welcoming, diverse, representative of and responsive to the communities we serve. Our hope is that the Marine BIPOC team will be actively involved in the process of identifying this staff member. As we are all aware, the COVID-19 SARS-CoV2 pandemic will severely restrict our budget for the next four years, at a minimum. Despite the global financial challenges we are facing, we regard this position as essential and commit to searching for external funding and prioritize supporting this new position that is critical to changing the culture and practice of the department. We have identified four possible pathways to fund this position: (1) Proposals to private foundation sources, NSF ADVANCE, NSF IGER, NSF NRT etc., (2) Budgeting 2-4 weeks/year of salary for the DEI staff member in PIs regular NSF proposals, (3) Working with the chairs and faculty of Ocean & Resources Engineering, Atmospheric Sciences and Earth Sciences to share resources to
support this position, and (4) Working with Amrita Malik, head of Campus Climate Initiatives, to request this position at the University level. We recognize, given the state of the global economy, that this may be an incremental process, and we welcome any other creative solutions for fundraising and staffing this position.

Once a staff member is on board to oversee DEI issues, we suggest that the status of the interim IDEI committee would change to “permanent DEI Advisory Committee”. The DEI Advisory Committee would interface with and provide guidance and input to the person holding the DEI position. In this phase of its work, it will be important for the DEI Advisory Committee to be populated by individuals representing stakeholders from all levels within the department (staff, students, faculty, researchers).

**Anti-racism training:** In response to your request, and with the understanding that we need to look outside our department for help, we have reached out to the Department of Ethnic Studies, Dr. Punhehi Lipe (Truth and Racial Healing and Trauma Initiative and Native Hawaiian Affairs Program Office), as well as to Professor Mari Matsuda, Professor of Law and nationally recognized critical race theorist to aid us in tailoring existing professional training modules to educate our faculty, researchers, staff, students and postdoctoral researchers in understanding the history of systemic racism in universities - including the University of Hawaii. We are in early discussions with these groups, and if their services require substantial funding, we will request that the IDEI committee write proposals to find funds to support this work. We will also ask the IDEI committee to look to other universities for examples of effective anti-racism training. Anti-racism training will be offered annually to all members of the Oceanography department.

**Valuing anti-racism work, improvement of mentoring, and community service.** Under the policies outlined in the department’s Periodic Evaluation of Oceanography Faculty (https://www.soest.hawaii.edu/oceanography/policies.html), the basis of periodic evaluation of faculty is “continued professional growth as evidenced by the quality, effectiveness and continuity of activities in the areas of teaching, research and service”. It is stated in the policy that “service can take many forms and includes both administrative and committee work”. We propose that the IDEI committee be tasked with working with faculty to ensure that anti-racism work, improvement of mentoring, and community building activities are also valued in the post-tenure evaluation of faculty under service contributions. The process of changing post-tenure evaluation criteria has several steps, it must be approved by the departmental faculty by majority vote, the university and the union.

**History of Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiian oppression:** The University of Hawaii is a Native Hawaiian-serving institution and has a goal of becoming a “Hawaiian place of learning”. Toward this goal, we propose as our theme for the first phase of our transformation the following ʻōlelo noʻeau, which will help us actualize anti-racist, anti-discriminatory work while centering our host culture, “Hāʻokuahi nō lā o ka molihihi. A stranger only for a day. After the first day as a guest, one must help with the work.” Importantly, this statement acknowledges that our department is new to this work, but we are prepared to collectively work toward effecting change. Moreover, by understanding the history of oppression of Native Hawaiians, the
solutions we build together can be intersectional with issues of racism and discrimination. We have reached out to Dr. Punihei Lipe and asked for her assistance to develop orientation appropriate materials, with the help of the IDEI committee, for new staff, students, faculty, and researchers. This training will also be given to all members of the Department of Oceanography when it becomes available. Further, Dr. Rosie Alegado, Director for the Sea Grant Center of Excellence in Integrated Knowledge Systems has agreed to provide annual training in Kūlana Noiʻiʻi, a dynamic and equitable process for establishing and maintaining community-researcher partnerships.

**Hoʻoponopono:** In response to your request to provide opportunity for hoʻoponopono, we have begun to educate ourselves on the process. It is our understanding that hoʻoponopono is a reconciliation process by which all participants agree to uncover the layers of discord and hurt in order to achieve forgiveness. Hoʻoponopono is a worthy goal for our department to engage in, but in our estimation, we have not yet undergone the proper preparation and work needed to make this process meaningful. We can work toward reconciliation by first addressing ongoing institutional problems with actions that take time and will be ongoing. Committing to and carrying out your other requests will put us on the path to being able to engage in hoʻoponopono. Therefore, we set preparation for hoʻoponopono as a goal that the IDEI committee will evaluate once a semester.

In the following paragraphs, we include additional steps that address your requests and move to change the culture and practice of the Department of Oceanography that are proposed and/or in the early stages of development.

**Formalizing recruiting to address diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts for graduate students and postdoctoral researchers**

**Creating pathways:** As we look for effective mechanisms to increase diversity in the oceanography department, we can reflect upon the actions of our undergraduate Global Environmental Sciences (GES) program. The GES chair and steering committee actively strive to recruit students from under-represented groups. A major accomplishment of GES has been to establish *Halau Ola Honua, Our Living World* as part of a statewide collaborative NSF proposal with Windward Community College, Honolulu Community College and Kauai Community College. The objectives of *Halau Ola Honua* are to increase recruitment of Native Hawaiian and other underrepresented high school students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields at University of Hawaiʻi Community Colleges, increase retention, and facilitate the transition of these students to programs like GES. Many of the students from underrepresented groups in our graduate oceanography program are graduates of the GES program. More recently we have had students from *Halau Ola Honua* join our program. These students are innovators; they are making requests for a better future for themselves and for all who will follow. We commend them, and all members of the Marine BIPOC team for bringing these inequalities into the light. We will strive to write proposals to support opportunities like *Halau Ola Honua* to continue to make our environment more representative of the communities we serve.
Public statement supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion: Over the past few months, department staff, consulting with the Chairwoman, have been working to create a new website for the Department of Oceanography. The department will have a clear statement supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion on the front page of the department’s new webpage. The IDEI committee and the Marine BIPOC team will be asked to take the lead in the creation and approval of the department’s statement before it is placed on the website.

Retention and support services: The SOEST Maile Mentoring Program was initiated in 2013 to identify Native Hawaiian and underrepresented kama‘aina science undergraduate students interested in transitioning to SOEST baccalaureate science degree programs at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. In an effort to tap into Hawai‘i’s local talent pool, SOEST has actively started partnering with community colleges to recruit kama‘aina students into its degree programs. The overarching goal of these partnerships is to foster a transfer pathway from the community colleges to geoscience degree programs at UH Mānoa, with a focus on Native Hawaiian and other underrepresented students. The mission of the SOEST Maile Mentoring Bridge program is to attract kama‘aina undergraduates into SOEST degree programs and help them thrive through individualized mentoring and peer support.

Maile mentees are Native Hawaiian, kama‘aina, and underrepresented minority undergraduates in the UH system who are either current or prospective SOEST students. Each mentee is paired with a mentor who is an underrepresented SOEST graduate student, postdoctoral research associate, or recent graduate. Mentor-mentee pairs meet once or twice every month during the semester over lunch, and all participants attend group activities to share experiences, provide a sense of community, and strategize solutions to any problems that they may be experiencing. In short, the Maile mentoring program follows students from the community college, providing numerous opportunities for contact with faculty and research experiences at SOEST (see figure). Maile Mentoring tracks students through the transfer process and all the way through to graduation. This program, which began as a professional
development project by a former Oceanography graduate student (Assistant Professor Anela Choy, now at Scripps) has had a deep and lasting influence on our community.

We propose that members of the IDEI committee meet once a semester with Maile mentors and mentees as a group activity to introduce the Maile mentees to the Department of Oceanography’s commitment to providing a welcoming and supportive environment for all students. This will also provide the IDEI committee, and department, an opportunity to learn from the Maile mentees how to make the oceanography program more accessible to them. This will allow the mentees to become more acquainted with members of our community, and perhaps allow them to envision opportunities after graduation from their undergraduate programs, thereby strengthening the pathway between the undergraduate and graduate programs.

**Diversity in national and international recruitment:** In order to increase diversity in the Department of Oceanography and the field of oceanography in general, we must identify and engage talented individuals from under-represented groups. As a department with an international reputation for excellence, we can work toward engaging and recruiting under-represented groups beyond the borders of our state. To this end, we commit to generating updated outreach and promotional materials with the help of the IDEI committee that highlight the exciting opportunities available in our department and field. We also commit to distributing those materials to a diverse set of institutions, which will include Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other minority-serving institutions. We will also ask the IDEI committee to facilitate virtual seminar exchanges with STEM departments at minority-serving institutions to increase exposure of our department and field beyond the traditional talent pool.

Perhaps equally important to identifying areas in which increased diversity must be sought, is to clearly identify existing and potential barriers to achieving the desired diversity. Focused effort to identify such barriers in advance, and strategizing ways to reduce or eliminate such barriers, will increase the likelihood that efforts to achieve diversity will be successful. This is a task that is ideally suited to the IDEI and the proposed IDEI Advisory Committee.

**Establishing healthy, respectful and productive relationships between advisors, students and postdoctoral researchers:**

**Graduate student survey:** A survey is being developed to be given to students annually regarding level of satisfaction with the mentoring they are receiving, as well as other aspects of departmental life. The SOEST Earth Sciences Department (ERTH) conducts such a survey, and our department chairwoman is working with our graduate student organization (Na Kama Kai) to use the ERTH survey as a basis for creating one that is specifically customized for students in our department. Survey feedback will be used to identify existing areas that need attention or intervention, and/or potential problems that may be on the horizon that can be preempted by taking action.
**Student-advisor contract:** A team of some of our senior graduate students is putting together a Student-Advisor Contract that would function to ensure both parties, advisor and the graduate student, have shared expectations about their professional relationship. Such a contract is presently under consideration for adoption by the SOEST Earth Sciences Department. This contract would also be shared with the student’s thesis committee so that expectations for mentoring are clearly understood within the wider circle of the committee. It seems clear that the more transparent and public expectations are for behavior and performance, and the more widely known, the higher the probability that individuals will strive to meet expectations.

**Changing the approach to faculty searches by addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion**

**Educating Faculty:** On February 27 and 28, 2020 four faculty members (Dr. Seth Bushinsky, Dr. Phil Thompson, Dr. Rosie Alegado, Dr. Angel White) and the Chairwoman of the Department of Oceanography participated in a search advocates training workshop facilitated by Oregon State University's Search Advocates program founder and director Anne Gillies, and co-sponsored by SOEST, Provost Bruno, and the UH Office of the President. This training came after years of lobbying from the Women in SOEST group. Search Advocates are process advisors who serve as external search committee members to enhance diversity, validity, and equity in university search and selection. Their preparation includes a two-part workshop series addressing topics including current research, theory, and practical strategies to help search committees test their thinking, address complex process concerns, improve search validity and equity, understand/promote diversity, mitigate conflicts of interest, and anticipate/address a variety of other potential bias risks. Each search advocate advances inclusive excellence by identifying and promoting practices that advance diversity and social justice and minimizing the impacts of cognitive and structural biases. As search committee members, advocates are able to explore assumptions, norms, and practices. The search advocate plays a vital role in position development, recruitment, screening, interviews, references, evaluation, and integration of the new faculty or staff member into the institution. During this training, all five of our trained department members, along with Associate Dean Anita Lopez, drafted the advertisement for four new positions (Microbial Oceanographer, Physical Oceanographer, Marine Geochemist and Deep-Sea Ecologist) in the Department of Oceanography. The subject of diversity, equity and inclusion was the centerpiece of a subsequent 3 March 2020 faculty meeting in which this advertisement was discussed, edited and overwhelmingly approved by the faculty. This honest discussion about the need for a more diverse faculty, which occurred months before the Marine BIPOC letter, was a turning point for the Department in terms of equity, diversity and inclusion, and sets the stage for all future searches. This is a small step forward, when faced with the true work that will follow. The important point is that in this discussion, the department recognized that it must be more accessible and welcoming to individuals from groups underrepresented in the field. From the overwhelmingly positive vote in support of this effort, it is clear that the majority of the department is committed to this. Our long term goal is for the Department of Oceanography faculty to represent the diversity of its students and the state of Hawaii.
Changing the culture and practice of the Department of Oceanography

Establishing a Code of Conduct for the Department of Oceanography: In the first faculty meeting of the fall of 2020, Associate Dean Anita Lopez will join us to discuss the SOEST Code of Conduct (SOEST CoC). This document (drafted by the SOEST DEI committee with examples from the Department of Earth Sciences in SOEST) provides guidelines for ethical and professional conduct pertaining to everyone within SOEST. The intent of the SOEST CoC is to provide heightened awareness of the need to consciously build professionalism, trust, respect, two-way communication, and shared expectations. An oceanography department-wide meeting with staff, students, faculty, researchers and postdoctoral researchers has been planned to discuss and begin customization and adoption of the CoC for the Department of Oceanography (OCN CoC). Panel members for this discussion have been invited and will be: Dr. Barbara Bruno, Dr. Diamond Tachera, Ms. Kate Feloy and Dr. Phil Thompson. In this process, we must customize the OCN CoC to explicitly stand against racism in its implied and overt forms. We openly invite input from all members of the oceanography department as we work through this process together as a community. This sentiment must also be reflected in the Student-Advisor contract (described previously) and the Graduate Student Handbook.

Faculty Meetings: By way of this letter, we invite a representative from the IDEI committee to each of our faculty meetings and will provide time for that representative to address IDEI concerns and provide IDEI committee updates.

Changes to the OCN780 seminar series: Dr. Angel White, lead instructor of OCN780 seminar in the fall 2020 semester, has carefully designed the fall 2020 seminar series to include a majority of speakers who are from underrepresented groups in STEM fields. Dr. White has also arranged for screenings of two films that addresses the experiences of underrepresented groups in STEM fields.

Recognition: Faculty service often goes unrecognized in the Department of Oceanography, which prides itself on being one of the top-ranked oceanographic schools in the world. Compensation for research comes through successful proposals, published manuscripts, invited talks, books, memberships in societies and other means, while service often goes unrewarded. We propose several methods to raise awareness of service in our department: (1) a yearly award for service recognition. This individual would be nominated by individuals in the department and selected by the awards committee. (2) The Department of Oceanography has been given permission by the SOEST Dean’s Office to provide teaching credits to a faculty member who spends substantial time contributing to diversity, equity, and inclusivity in our department. This would need to be discussed with, and approved by, the IDEI committee and department chair before substantial work is done. (3) As described previously, we propose that the IDEI committee be tasked with working with faculty to ensure that anti-racism work, improvement of mentoring, and community building activities are valued in the post-tenure evaluation of faculty under service contributions.
Accountability

**Within 3 months**
- Interim Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (IDEI) committee is established.
- The OCN780 seminar series includes a majority of speakers who are from underrepresented groups in STEM fields and provide screenings of the films “Can We Talk” and “Picture a Scientist”.

**Within 9 months**
- The IDEI committee identifies and pursues 3-5 funding opportunities for DEI coordinator position.

**Within 1 year**
- IDEI committee meets bi-monthly for 9 months
- Anti-racism training is given to all members of the Department of Oceanography.
- The process of valuing anti-racism work, improvement of mentoring, and community building activities in the post-tenure evaluation of faculty under service contributions is underway.
- Members of the Department of Oceanography are educated on the history of Native Hawaiian oppression.
- A pathway to readiness for Hooonponono is developed and assessed.
- The Department of Oceanography has a public statement supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion approved by the IDEI committee and the Marine BIPOC group.
- Programs and/or lectures that amplify the importance of indigenous scientists are part of the Department of Oceanography.
- Promotional materials that highlight the exciting opportunities available in our department and field are developed and shared by the IDEI committee with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other minority-serving institutions.
- Existing and potential barriers to achieving diversity are identified by the IDEI committee.
- Graduate student mentoring is improved through the development of a graduate student survey and student-advisor contract.
- The SOEST Code of Conduct has been customized for the Department of Oceanography
- A representative from the IDEI committee attends and contributes to each faculty meeting.

**Within 3 years** (please note, there is an anticipated time delay for faculty searches due to the financial impact of COVID-19 SARS-CoV2 and the subsequent hiring freeze)
- Search advocates are involved in advertisement development, recruitment, screening, interviews, references, and in evaluation of all candidates
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statements are requested of each applicant to the Department of Oceanography.
Looking Forward

These actions, in concert, represent the first steps in the Department of Oceanography’s commitment to foster a culture and community that values and seeks the perspectives and contributions of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, elevates indigenous Hawaiian knowledge and its practitioners, actively practices anti-racism, and strives for a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment. We envision a strong partnership between the Department of Oceanography and the Marine BIPOC team.

We are embarking upon a process that will be iterative in nature. One activity will inform subsequent activities. It is important that we recognize that all parties are working in good faith, and that although change may not come as quickly as we might wish, we are bending the arc of progress toward a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

We are grateful for this opportunity to work and learn together with kindness, respect, and humility.

With Aloha,

Professor and Chairwoman, Margaret Anne McManus
Associate Professor Rosie Alegado
Researcher H. Annamalai
Assistant Professor Seth M. Bushinsky
Associate Professor Glenn Carter
Professor Edward F. DeLong
Professor Jeffrey Drazen
Associate Professor Kyle Edwards
Assistant Researcher Sara Ferron
Associate Professor Brian Glazer
Professor Erica Goetze
Associate Specialist Michael Guidry
Assistant Professor Nick Hawco
Professor David Ho
Assistant Researcher Andrea Jani
Professor David M. Karl
Professor Doug Luther
Associate Professor Craig Nelson
Professor Brian Powell
Professor Bo Qiu
Professor Kelvin Richards
Professor Kathleen Ruttenberg
Professor Chris Sabine
Professor Niklas Schneider
Specialist Karen E. Selph