Physics Department Statement

The Physics Department faculty are deeply disturbed by the persistence of systemic racism present in all aspects of our society. We condemn all acts of racism and we support the protest movement to affirm the principle of Black Lives Matter.

We acknowledge that the field of physics in higher education has been greatly affected by racism that exists in our community. We recognize that our field has not been welcoming to Black, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC). This has profoundly detrimental effects on the progress of Physicists of color and as a result, the entire field of physics.

There are many examples of great black physicists in our field: Neil deGrasse Tyson, Arthur B.C. Walker, Herman Branson, Katherine Johnson, Ronald McNair, J. Ernest Wilkins Jr., Elmer Imes, Willie Hobbs Moore, Homer A. Neal, Warren Elliot Henry, and many others. Edward Alexander Bouchet was the first African-American to earn a PhD from any American University. He received a PhD in physics at Yale in 1876. Despite these great achievements early in the path of modern science, the field of physics suffers from systemic racism. In our department, we seek to create a community that promotes equality, belonging and justice for our students.

As physicists at Wofford, we commit ourselves to develop our knowledge and skills as anti-racists. We will take every step to ensure that our department and the larger Wofford community is a place for emerging scholars of color to thrive. We commit ourselves to teaching in ways that are anti-racist by participating in anti-racism education, reflecting on how our teaching practices can be more inclusive, and speaking out against racism. We encourage you to join us in finding ways that you can self-educate, reflect, and speak out against racism. Many resources can be found on the Wofford College Diversity, Equity and Inclusion webpage.

To continue to create an inclusive learning environment for our students we commit to:

- Educating ourselves on ways to provide safe, supportive, inclusive and effective classrooms and laboratories. We will do this through attendance at seminars, readings, and discussion with faculty, staff, students, and our community scholars outside of Wofford. We have also created a working group within our department that all faculty are welcome to join to support our growth.
- Conduct a review of our department and develop a plan that creates a path forward that is inclusive in its classroom, lab, and extra-curricular activities. We will invite students and other interested parties to participate in this process.
- Establish clear policies and pathways of communication that reinforce the code of conduct within our classes/laboratory and develop a statement of norms that the physics community will uphold.
- Provide free membership to the National Society of Black Physicists and the National Society of Hispanic Physicists for interested students.
- Collaborate with members outside of physics (both at Wofford and nationally) to get feedback and support for initiatives that have been implemented within our department.
This statement was written by the faculty in the Physics department in collaboration with the ODI. We would like to thank Taifha Alexander, Assistant Dean of Students for Diversity & Leadership, and the other members of the Anti-Racism Team for their leadership and expertise in drafting this document.

Sincerely,
Greg Boeshaar, Carolyn Martsberger, Mackay Salley, Dan Welch and Steve Zides