



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES
**BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS
ENGINEERING**
VIRGINIA TECH.

155 Ag Quad Lane – 200 Seitz Hall
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
(540) 231-6615
dredwards@vt.edu ejling@vt.edu
www.bse.vt.edu

Dear BSE Community,

Engineers are ethically bound to apply our training, judgment and experience in service to public health, safety, and welfare. Our professional service generally does not require us to publicly comment on issues of a social nature. Many of us are attracted to engineering because the work is largely technical, quantitative and objective and we are often considered non-controversial figures whose opinions regarding the society we serve can remain private.

But we not only serve society, we are integral members of society. The staff and faculty of the Biological Systems Engineering Department have the responsibility to prepare future generations not only to be ethical and technically competent engineers, but to make a positive difference in the world. At times, this duty requires us to call out unacceptable situations and to reaffirm our own principles and values. This is one of those times.

The recent, horrific deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, all African Americans, have ignited a public firestorm of unrest across the nation. Tragically, these individuals are only three among a staggeringly large number of our fellow citizens who have been killed under similar circumstances. We know many of these stories. We saw lethal, unjustified responses in clearly non-life threatening situations. The crushing weight of so many of these fatal encounters, connected by such strong common threads, leads to an inescapable conclusion that racism continues to operate in America – far too often with deadly consequences.

President Sands, Dean Grant and Dean Ross have shared their timely and well-reasoned responses to recent events and have reaffirmed Virginia Tech's [Principles of Community](#), the values of community, diversity, and excellence underlying those Principles, and their commitment to positive actions that will lead to sustainable change. We in BSE stand squarely with our leadership in respecting the dignity of all persons and valuing the inherent rewards of a diverse and inclusive society. We stand in open opposition to unjust, disrespectful, and dehumanizing treatment, the language that encourages it, and the passivity that sustains it. We look forward to the Biological Systems Engineering Department's participation as a fully engaged partner in continuing College and University efforts to ensure that we are among those who work to bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice.

Dwayne Edwards
Professor and Department Head

Erin Ling
Sr. Extension Associate and
Chair, BSE Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Those in the Virginia Tech community who need assistance or counseling support may contact:

Cook Counseling Center 540-231-6557

Dean of Students Office 540-231-3787

Employee Assistance Program

Anthem 855-223-9277

Aetna 888-238-6232

Kaiser Permanente 866-517-7042

Optima Health Vantage HMO 866-846-2682

Hokie Wellness 540-231-2233 (students) or 540-231-8878 (employees)

InclusiveVT 540-231-7500

Office of Housing and Residence Life 540-231-6205

Women's Center at Virginia Tech 540-231-7806