BLACK LIVES MATTER
This statement is written by Professors Bing, Davis, Wasserman and Hall on behalf of the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Texas at Arlington. It comes after many days of worldwide protests about police use of force and the wrongful death of black men and women in the United States. We see racism in America as the pandemic that this country has yet to address fully.

The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice condemns acts of violence and racism directed toward unarmed black men and women. We recognize that the world for black men and women is a toxic one; and that, black men in particular must respond to negative stereotypes in American society on a daily basis. We recognize the links between slavery, racial profiling, and mass incarceration. We condemn the disparate treatment of black lives, with respect to health care, education, and criminal justice. We assert that black lives matter equally with all others, and that black men and women should not be devalued, dehumanized, or objectified.

The Department further asserts that police officers should behave more like guardians and less like warriors when patrolling minority neighborhoods. We believe that the killing of cooperative and unarmed blacks is tantamount to a modern-day lynching. We also believe that police officers should be held to greater levels of professional and personal accountability, and we train our students in the highest standards of ethics and respect for others. We believe that major police reforms are needed, but are meaningless if there are no consequences for the inappropriate use of excessive force.

The Department believes that we can address systemic racism in some of the following ways: First, we ask whites to address the unequal treatment of black people. Second, we ask for state and federal legislative re-evaluation of qualified immunity, and a review of Court decisions that allow law enforcement to use minor moving violations (e.g., broken tail light) as a pretext for a police stop. Third, we implore a return to the tenets set forth in President Obama’s Task Force Commission on 21st Century Policing, with its emphasis on transparency, procedural justice, and reduced use of force. We believe that education, recruitment and training are critically important in providing the requisite social skills to de-escalate potential conflicts with the public. A single police stop should not escalate into the loss of life of another black man or woman. We believe that police officers should not deny the humanity of any person. We also recognize that the world is not value neutral and that law enforcement officers must become aware of their implicit and explicit biases. An awareness of these biases might mitigate against views of black men and women as threats, suspicious, and criminal. There is an abundance of evidence, for example, that black men and women are more likely to be stopped by police than their white counterparts. We also recognize that there are many law enforcement officers who are doing the right thing, and we challenge these officers of conscience to speak up, less they become complicit in the maltreatment of minority persons.

We pledge as a Department to create a George Floyd Black Lives Matter Scholarship for our students. This scholarship would memorialize the lives of George Floyd, Brionna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Eric Garner, and so many others, who lost their lives due to unnecessary use of force, often because of the color of their skin. As a department we pledge to make certain that our students understand the principles of fairness, equity, and justice as they pursue careers in criminal justice. We also commit as faculty and staff to acknowledge the influence of race in our daily interactions and that we will strive to work together, without bias, to ensure fundamental fairness for all.