Dear Marshall Community:

My heart is breaking today. Two months ago, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, our country came together to save lives. Today, as we still grapple with this pandemic, we are being driven apart by the scourge of systemic racism and social injustice.

As with many of you, I was horrified by the video of George Floyd, pinned to the ground pleading for his life. It elicited myriad feelings of anguish, anger, and disgust. The tragic and violent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, coupled with the shameful prejudice and xenophobia exemplified by the unnerving Cooper incident in Central Park, and increasing discrimination against those of Asian descent, reveal an unthinkable pattern of hatred and inhumanity.

The business community can be a powerful and positive force for social change. In these unprecedented times, I believe it is our duty at Marshall to use our knowledge, voice, and influence to bring about meaningful, equitable, and unifying change, both at our School and beyond. In this regard one of our greatest contributions is the education of individuals, not only to lead corporations, but to lead in society. In this dark period I increasingly find our students to be a source of hope for our future. As I noted at our recent Marshall commencement, those who have had to overcome the most have often also scaled the highest pinnacles. That is why I am predicting that the Marshall Class of 2020 will help to transform the world and, that when the history books are written on this period, they will note that it ended up producing some of our greatest leaders.

Let us answer this generational call to action—to lead ethically and courageously, to stand against injustice, to challenge the status quo, and to bring together our nation and the world. This Friday, June 5, 2020, at noon, the Marshall Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will host a special Marshall Community Conversation: A Collective Call to Action. Additional details will follow.

Stay strong,

Gareth

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