To the College of Charleston Student Body,

We come to you devastated and outraged by the senseless killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and too many other Black men and women. With this, we wish to send our condolences to those affected and our support to the Black Lives Matter Movement.

As a new administration, we want one of our first actions to be standing in solidarity with our Black students, professors, and staff. The Student Government Association strongly denounces the actions of racist institutions and is offering support in any way we can to prevent these unacceptable actions from being repeated. We pledge ourselves to help reshape the systems that are negatively discriminating against Black lives.

This weekend, the Charleston community saw abuses of power by police as protestors were met with tear gas, curfews, and undeserved brutality. We watched as our peers and surrounding community endured unnecessary violence and verbal aggression while exercising their right to protest and stand for justice. We firmly denounce the use of force during peaceful protests by the Charleston Police Department. We are also calling for Charleston Police and CofC's Campus Police to stop actively targeting protestors through their actions and language (as seen in the timely warning sent to the student body).

We want to celebrate our Black students and those standing alongside them. We are proud of those who fight for justice and hope everyone stays safe. Briefly, we would like to mention the racist social media posts from students at CofC. Let us be clear: we are not representing those students' views and are calling for a response from administration. That is the most recognition those students will receive from us. We stand firmly in our belief that racism and brutality have no place on our campus. This is not a partisan issue; it is a human issue. We unequivocally stand with the Black community.

To our Black students, you are not alone. We stand with you now and always. If you need anything from us, we will be there. Our commitment to you is unwavering, and this SGA administration will ensure that our efforts to stand with you will always remain a priority. We know that we must uplift Black voices on campus and take the necessary actions to ensure that we are supporting our Black students. We are with you and are opening the door wider so that everyone feels that their voices are heard.

We recognize and understand that many students have not lived through these experiences. As a result, we have attached a document of resources that will enable you to obtain valuable information regarding this topic.

Racism has been built into many of the institutions around us. We must acknowledge the history of the Black community in Charleston. Without their contributions, the city would be unrecognizable, and the College of Charleston would not have been built. You can learn more about the College of Charleston’s role in slavery in this article by The Post and Courier. As a Charleston community, we know that this prejudice, unfortunately, didn’t stop hundreds of years ago — Mother Emanuel stands as a reminder of the continual blight of prejudice. If you are returning to campus in the fall, we encourage you all to spend time at the Avery Research Center and visit this memorial at the back of Rivers Green designed to honor the Black men and women buried under our campus. While we can never forget how slavery, racism, and prejudice have shaped our city and campus, we must
deny prejudice a place anywhere in our community and continue to work to ensure that our campus leaves it in the past.

We understand that we face a learning curve and, as a student government, we are working towards educating our organization and staying open to listening to student voices. In issuing this statement, we must acknowledge our majority non-Black senate and our limited perspective. In the past, we have not done enough to promote diversity and inclusion in our body, but we are actively working to create equitable representation. Transparency and communication are priorities to this administration. To this point, it is important to note that we discussed the content of this statement with a number of Black leaders on campus. We thank you for your input and hope we have done justice to your suggestions.

For anyone who wants to talk, be heard, or reflect, please reach out, we will listen. The emails of our Executive Board are under our signatures. This administration will always welcome messages from our student body and will continue to encourage feedback regarding how to improve the values of diversity and inclusion both in the Student Government Association and across campus.

In Solidarity,
The Student Government Association Executive Council

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