



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA -  
CHAPEL HILL

David L. Penn, Ph.D.  
Linda Wagner-Martin Distinguished Professor  
(919) 843-7514  
(919) 962-2537 FAX  
e-mail: dpenn@email.unc.edu

Department of Psychology and Neuroscience  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Campus Box 3270, Davie Hall  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3270  
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/psychweb/>

### Response to Trainees of Color Statement

Thank you for sending your statement to the faculty and graduate students in the Psychology and Neuroscience department at UNC. As a point of introduction, I am a faculty member in the Clinical Psychology program. My areas of research interest are in social cognition and psychosocial treatment for individuals with schizophrenia.

I have read your statement multiple times. I have started, written, and rewritten responses. I have struggled to find the right words for fear of saying the wrong thing or making matters worse. I have written responses in my head while jogging, while in the garden, and while engaged in other tasks. I am overthinking things and not thinking enough. But, I want and need to respond. Thus, I am going to speak from the heart.

I am a straight, white male but I still feel pain about how you have been treated. It disgusts me that individuals are treated differently because of their identity. I am not a person of color and I have the privilege of not being forced to constantly think about being white or male, and how these identities affect my position in this world. Thus, I can't imagine what it would be like to confront this **every day**, simply because you are a person of color.

You have an absolute right to be angry and an even stronger right to make these demands of us. We should be held accountable; for the past, and every day moving forward. In this response, I hold myself accountable.

There are a number of activities that I plan to undertake. These include the following:

- 1) Making it clear on my lab website that underrepresented scholars are welcome and encouraged to apply to my lab.
- 2) Posting this response on my lab website.
- 3) Finding specific workshops on how to mentor graduate and undergraduate students of color (rather than assume that I can figure it out on my own). I will also engage in efforts to learn about the experiences of students of color in academia, such as following them on twitter, and reading relevant books/articles by students (or mentors) of color.
- 4) Consistent with #3, I will continue to strive to have diverse representation in our lab. Of our three graduate students, two of them are persons of color. Of our six undergraduate

students, half of them are persons of color. I will commit to having at least half of my lab be from under-represented groups, and will aim to use knowledge gained in #3 to ensure that I can support and uplift these students of color in their academic endeavors.

- 5) Although I have been the faculty representative on the Clinical Program's diversity committee, I need to do more. I will join the Psychology and Neuroscience Diversity committee and will also seek out opportunities at the college/university level.
- 6) I will organize a panel and/or colloquium at either the Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapy (ABCT) or a major schizophrenia conference on race and psychosis (either related to research in this area or on why people of color are under-represented as researchers).
- 7) I will continue to fight for hiring faculty of color. There has been a major hole in the clinical program since Enrique Neblett left. This is also a result of having just one or two people of color in our department, forcing them to carry the load for everyone else. I vow to be vocal and engaged in such recruitment and hiring processes (even if I am not a member of that specific hiring committee) and to hold the program, department, and college leadership accountable for not achieving these goals.
- 8) I am eligible for a sabbatical during the 2021-2022 academic year. One of my goals for the sabbatical will be learning more about conducting research on Black individuals with schizophrenia, as well as in mentoring students of color. I will devote time to reading about research in this area, attending relevant workshops and symposia, and visiting labs where such research is conducted.
- 9) Starting three years ago, I administered an anonymous survey to my graduate students to get feedback on how I'm doing as a mentor (and ways for me to improve). I noticed that I don't have any questions on how responsive I am to diversity-related issues. I will add such questions to this survey.
- 10) I realize that the research questions that I ask (which is currently examining race, social cognition and functioning in schizophrenia), as a white, heterosexual male, might not be those that best address racism-related issues in schizophrenia. Therefore, I will critically examine my research program, such as study design, language used, and the scope of it, to increase the likelihood that it will have a real impact on Black individuals with schizophrenia. One of my former students suggested that I consider learning more about community-based participatory research, which will hopefully give me greater insight into the perspective and experiences of Black individuals with schizophrenia.

Thank you for demanding this response from white faculty. I greatly admire your courage and your conviction, and I stand with you.

If anyone wants to follow up with me individually, please send me an email or call my cell phone (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

David Penn