



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON
PROVOST AND VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

May 17, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: UMass Boston Faculty

FROM: Joseph B. Berger, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joseph B. Berger".

SUBJECT: Africana Studies and Trotter Institute

In recent months, questions have been raised about the future of the Africana Studies Department and the Trotter Institute. I write to assure you today that the Department and the Institute remain essential and are a high priority to UMass Boston.

I appreciate that there are real concerns about the viability of both units in the context of immediate needs and long-term planning. I also recognize that for the Department and the Institute to contribute to advancing the University's academic, scholarly, and service mission, they require additional resources. UMass Boston is committed to providing such resources immediately and long-term.

Since last fall, we have explored how best to reallocate limited university resources toward this goal. A proposal for the future of the Trotter Institute, put forward by a committee co-led by the Black Faculty, Staff, and Student Association, included a minimum operating budget of \$70,000, appointment of three academic faculty members (tenured director, associate director, research assistant professor), three permanent professional staff, and two graduate assistantships. This would require an investment of approximately \$800,000 per year.

We are already advancing these plans and investments for the Trotter Institute, and I am pleased that Professors Michael Johnson and Mickaella Perina have agreed to lead the transition of the Trotter Institute as co-chairs of a transition committee. The Trotter has continued some of its work, including work with Boston Public Schools through its partnership as part of the CANALA centers and institutes. I thank Professor Denise Patmon for her leadership of that work.

We also need to invest further in Africana Studies, and it has been clear Africana Studies can benefit from bringing in senior scholars in addition to early-career faculty members. While we have already begun to invest in Africana Studies, including a \$75,000 innovation fund for the department for AY21-22 – the only department to receive such a fund this year—and the approval of a full-time administrative assistant for the department, more is clearly needed.

Immediately, I am committed to making current and future investments totaling approximately \$1.2 million, with more to follow pending the findings of the assessment. These include:

For Africana Studies:

- Hiring a senior scholar
- Hiring two tenure-track faculty positions in Africana Studies, one open rank and one assistant professor

For the Trotter Institute:

- Hiring a new director; this position will be filled through a broad national search for an established tenured senior scholar.
- Hiring a new staff member to support grant-writing, communications, and collaboration with the other CANALA centers and institutes
- Funding a graduate assistantship
- Increasing operational funding specifically in addition to increased funding for the CANALA group of centers and institutes
- As noted above, implementing a transition committee to be coordinated by Michael Johnson and Mickaella Perina, who will serve as co-chairs until a new director has been installed.

With a view to examining the challenges that have led to high staff turnover, we have retained outside expertise --attorneys Walter Prince, Dan Tarlow and Ralph Martin, who have assisted other higher education clients in reviewing faculty, research, academic, and student-related functions.

As I have noted previously in discussions regarding the Trotter Institute and Department of Africana Studies, I reiterate my gratitude and thanks to the Africana Studies department chairs and faculty, the Africana Studies search committee, and the cross-campus Trotter model taskforce for their service and ongoing contributions.

The university's initial commitment of a minimum of \$1.2 million to Africana Studies and the Trotter Institute is a significant investment, and it is the right thing to do. In the meantime, we look forward to the results of the ongoing assessment to help determine additional investments and steps for ensuring that we have a thriving Africana Studies Department and Trotter Institute.