We, the undergraduates of the Student Oceanography Society (SOS), have identified issues that both negatively impact the undergraduate community as a whole and perpetuate systems of inequality within the school. We demand the leadership of the School of Oceanography (SoO), including the Director, SoO administrators, and the faculty council, evaluate current policies and systems that have led to these issues and take action to ensure undergraduates have an equitable experience within the department. The lack of undergraduate inclusion in departmental activities, improper recruitment for internships, failing advisor program, minimal diversity requirements, and absence of a safe and functional feedback system actively harm the undergraduate experience. Our goal with this letter is to bring to light a small, yet significant, portion of the harms undergraduates face within the SoO and to complement the work the graduate students have done in demanding for systemic change in the SoO to combat racism by laying out what we think must be done to create a more equitable undergraduate experience. We are in full support of the initiatives the graduate and postdoc community have put forth and are appreciative of their continued support in our endeavour to address undergraduate specific concerns. We request a meeting with the SoO Director and faculty representatives, at the start of Fall Quarter 2020, to discuss the issues in further depth and to decide on a process to implement changes. The Director and faculty council, or a group of representatives, should thereon meet with undergraduate representatives once a quarter to discuss how these issues are being addressed. We hope the collaborative efforts of SoO faculty and undergraduate community members will be able to enact structural and behavioral changes to reduce harm undergraduates face, making a more inclusive and equitable experience.

Each issue below, in no order of importance, has an explanation and possible solutions or actions to take in order to mitigate the issue.

**Issue 1:**

**Undergraduate Inclusion**

As undergraduates, we are often not included in university discussions, seminars, and departmental events, and often feel unwelcome in the spaces where we are present. For example; most undergraduates are not invited to department parties such as the Holiday party, departmental social events such as ChemTea, or to departmental seminars including graduate student defenses. In spaces where we do attend, either through direct invitation or finding out ‘through the grapevine,’ many of us do not feel welcomed or included. Being welcomed and comfortable in these departmental events are crucial to an undergraduate’s sense of belonging and can impact retention in the field. Including undergraduates in seminars and Masters or PhD defenses can give first hand experience in what it would be like to continue in an academic career and actively shape our futures. The exclusivity of departmental events actively harms the equitable experience of undergraduates, especially students of underrepresented identities. The underrepresentation of BIPOC and queer people in oceanography is thus compounded instead of alleviated. To summarise, we pose the question: How can you expect to recruit BIPOC and queer undergraduates and have them feel welcome when there are current undergraduates who do not feel welcome or feel alienated by the department?
Undergraduates also do not have access to MyOcean and have no representation at faculty meetings, which leads undergraduates being in the dark of departmental workings, which often directly affects our community and experience. Currently, faculty meeting minutes can only be accessed through MyOcean, meaning we have no way to access them, leading undergraduates to have no say in matters that will directly affect us.

Proposed solutions:
1. We demand the department to include undergraduates in departmental events and discussions. This includes notifying students of all events, having events held in space large enough to hold expected attendance, and including undergraduates in conversations and groups.
2. We demand the creation of a system to notify undergraduates of upcoming events of all types. This could be in the form of an email listserv or a more detailed, up to date calendar (for example, the ESS department has a more robust calendar)
3. We call on the department to include 2 undergraduate note takers, at minimum, to attend faculty meetings. This would allow undergraduate representatives to take notes during the faculty meeting, especially for items that directly impact the undergraduate community, and then report back out all undergraduates. This will yield greater transparency within the department and increased dissemination of information to undergraduates.
4. We also call on the department to give undergraduates access to the departmental intranet, MyOcean. There is no way for this information to be disseminated to undergraduates. Currently, faculty meeting minutes can only be accessed through MyOcean, meaning we have no way to access them. In addition to this, if the current Hall Pass system continues, it would allow undergraduate students to submit building access requests, which currently requires a faculty member to submit on their behalf.

Including undergraduates in greater departmental workings, events, and discussions, will strengthen community and sense of belonging, yielding greater retention of undergraduates of underrepresented identities.

Issue 2:
More Frequent Feedback

Currently, the only structured way for undergraduates to provide feedback to faculty members is through end-of-quarter class evaluations. This system is not effective in supporting undergraduates as a whole, personally or academically, and does not adequately encompass harms faced outside of the classroom. Students can informally submit feedback or raise concerns with undergraduate advisors, such as Michelle Townsend, or with the SoO Director on individual basis, but this fails to alleviate the barriers of bringing issues forward, and is often inconsequential. The informality of doing so also removes any checks or assurances the harm
will be addressed by administration effectively and in a timely manner. Students in internship positions with faculty, who may be facing harm on an advisor/advisee level, do not have any structural way to submit feedback or raise their experiences of harm. The end-of-quarter evaluations do not encompass nor address the harm that is faced by students and fails to enact change for these harmful behaviors, many of which disproportionately affect students of underrepresented identities.

While the end-of-quarter evaluation does have some value, it does not address problems (individual or class structure related) within the duration of the class and feedback from this form is only taken seriously in extreme cases and fails to address recurring problems with the class or with faculty. While these evaluations can shine a light on classroom issues, it is after the fact, if it is addressed at all. There is no transparency or accountability for faculty to address issues raised in the evaluations and how behaviors or structure has changed. We, as students filling out end-of-quarter evaluations, are vehemently told to fill them out and that they are valued, but are often left in the dark in whether or not issues are addressed. We are not informed of structural or behavioral changes made in response to the evaluation. We do not know the power structure within the department to hold faculty accountable to these reviews. We also often feel the faculty are just looking for reviews that look good and if issues are raised, they are just brushed off as “spiteful students.”

Proposed solutions:

1. We demand a standard system for undergraduates to submit feedback in regard to faculty members. This should be an open, ongoing submission that is regularly reviewed by a third party, for example with the Center for Teaching and Learning. In order to be most effective, we believe this system should be designed or implemented through collaboration of the SoO faculty and undergraduate students. This feedback system should be able to:
   a. Provide optional anonymity as to protect the individual raising their issues.
   b. Compel administration in the department to address the concerns with the faculty in question.
   c. Enact behavioral or structural changes to reduce harm students will face moving forward. This could be mandatory attendance at a meeting which they can learn about the harm they are (un)consciously causing and why it is harmful to the individual.

2. We call for the establishment of a mid-quarter course evaluation, in addition to the end-of-quarter evaluation. This can be used by the instructor to more effectively instruct for the remainder of the course.

These solutions should be implemented before the end of the 2020/21 school year. We believe a system for regular feedback will empower undergraduates to voice their experiences, hold faculty accountable for their abuses of power and hostile behavior, and break down the culture of apparent impunity faculty act within.
**Issue 3:**

**Undergraduate Internships**

Internships are very important to the academic and future success of undergraduate students. Internships, in this context, include paid or unpaid work that a student conducts while advised by a member of faculty (this could include lab work, field work, work study, teaching assistant positions, etc.). They are essential for exploring different disciplines of oceanography and for building connections that are beneficial to students in their undergraduate career and beyond.

There is no standard way to advertise and hire undergraduates for internships within the department. The current method is through personal connections or through casual exchanges within the classroom. This method of hiring creates barriers for students that are not familiar with unwritten academic protocol and disproportionately impacts disadvantaged students. This also allows for faculty to show bias in the hiring process by only sharing information with students that have met their individual requirements for employment, which could include conscious and unconscious bias toward BIPOC and queer folk. All undergraduate oceanography students should have equal access to internships and other job opportunities within the school.

**Proposed solutions:**

1. **We propose a standard system to advertise internship positions to all undergraduate students.** This could be in the form of a department wide advertisement email, such as with Undertow, creating a specific email listserv for job positions, or advertising positions on a page within the oceanography website.

2. **We call for all internships to be paid or funded in the near future.** Having unpaid internships can be a barrier for underrepresented identities to participate. Many students of underrepresented identities cannot take on unpaid internships as they need paid positions to support themselves financially. Undergraduate students should be fairly compensated for their work.

Advertising internship positions to all undergraduates, regardless of year or identity, will make this valuable experience more equitable.

**Issue 4:**

**Increasing the DIV credit requirements for degree attainment**

The current degree Diversity requirements, at 3 credits, are not robust enough. Oceanography, like all sciences, has been built on the contributions of gender minorities and BIPOC while also not acknowledging the work that these groups put in. Current students of oceanography should engage in material that encourages thinking critically about topics such as
power, inequality, marginality, and social movements in order to acknowledge the history of oceanography as well as learn how to move the science forward. 3 credits is not enough to achieve this.

Proposed solutions:

1. We call on the department to increase the degree requirements to at least 5 credits.
2. We call for requirements to be more strict in order to petition credits for DIV fulfilment.
3. We call on the department to create an Oceanography specific diversity course, as Oceanography is one of the few College of Environment departments without a DIV course. This class should engage in the topic of inequality in marine sciences, or the contributions of underrepresented identities in marine science, and how we can use their story to build a better academic community.

These solutions should be implemented before the 2021/22 school year. We believe that increasing the Diversity requirements for undergraduate oceanography students will help build a greater understanding of how social issues are present in the sciences and will create graduates from our program that are better prepared to responsibly interact with the world.

**Issue 5:**

**Faculty mentorships**

One of the many amazing opportunities in this department is the faculty mentorships that oceanography students have. Undergraduates who declare oceanography as their major are assigned a faculty member as their mentor, which is usually done by Michelle Townsend, at the beginning of their freshman year. The advisor should act as a point of contact for the undergraduates to build a relationship with and ask academic, personal, or professional development questions. These faculty mentorships should also be a valuable resource for exploring oceanography disciplines as a career, if the student is so inclined, and for navigating their undergraduate career. However, this system is severely crippled and not effective in its goals. The mentorship program would be very beneficial to students if it functioned as intended, but the current system does not ensure an equitable experience for all undergraduates, fails to support the students who opt to have an advisor, and can even cause harm to some who are trying to do so.

Here is how the current mentorship system is failing undergrads: Incoming undergraduate students in oceanography often get a faculty member assigned, but this is not always the case. Many people do not get an advisor assigned, as most prevalent with undergrads who declare the major after their first quarter. When the advisor is assigned, there is no additional information passed on other than the basic principles of what an advisor should do. This can be extremely hard and even harmful for students who are unfamiliar with unwritten academic protocol of approaching a faculty advisor and how to develop a relationship with them. Once an advisor is assigned, one of the biggest points of harm is getting a response from the faculty advisor. Many people do not get a response and many people have to email the faculty
multiple times in order to get a response. This can be very discouraging and even harmful to incoming undergraduates who want to build a relationship with their faculty advisor. This unintentionally can add to the sense of estrangement within the oceanography community and communicates that they do not belong as they cannot even get a response from their faculty advisor. After this, it can be very difficult to have a meeting with the faculty advisor. The power imbalance between faculty advisor and student, which can be exacerbated by holding meetings in private office spaces, goes unchecked under the current system.

We call for a reworked faculty mentorship program in which:

1. Students are better matched with faculty in their discipline. Students can take a survey on their research interests, if they want an advisor, and what they would want in an advisor. Faculty would take a survey with the number of advisees they would be willing to take on (including zero), what they would want in an advisee, and what areas (academic, personal, industry etc.) they would be comfortable providing insight on. Students and faculty would then be matched independently. This would also serve to help keep undergraduate mentees better organized and easier for mentors to reach out to mentees they do not hear from.
   a. Students that join mid-year can opt to be matched with the first possible pairing or choose to wait until a pairing that fits with their interests becomes available possibly with the start of the next year.

2. Guidelines are improved. Expanded guidelines should be provided of how, when, or where to meet as well as potential questions for the mentor / mentee to ask one another. This will lower the barrier for undergraduates to reach out to faculty, especially those who have not had previous experience in doing so. SOS is willing to work jointly with faculty members, such as Michelle Townsend or Mikelle Nuwer, to create such guidelines.

3. Advisors should reach out to advisees. The onus of reaching out to faculty, which can be a daunting task for a first-year student, should be shifted more towards faculty reaching out to advisees.

4. The pool of advisors be expanded to include adjunct faculty in close departments such as the School of Marine and Environmental Affairs in order to broaden the scope of advisors expertise to include other ocean related disciplines of interest such as environmental policy.

5. A common place for advisors and advisees to meet should be provided, such as the 3rd or 4th floor common area. Increased visibility will help normalize advisor/advisee meetings as well as operate as a more even space for discussion than a personal office.

6. In the event of a change in situation such as changing interests or realized personal differences or other circumstances, either party can dissolve the advisor/advisee...
relationship with the student being placed back into the pool and treated as a student that joined mid-year.

7. The department should provide a common place for all mentors/mentees to meet and to provide refreshments. By meeting in a common area, such as the 3rd or 4th floor common area, this can make undergraduates feel more comfortable with their mentor compared to being in their office. This can also allow other undergraduates to see these meetings and make them more commonplace in the department.

These solutions should be implemented by the end of the upcoming school year. By offering this uniform way of meeting with faculty members, it will decrease the barrier for undergraduates to reach out and encourage relationship building with faculty.

Signed

**Undergraduates:**
Leland Wood, Oceanography, Class of 2021
Marissa E. Leatherman, Oceanography and Marine Biology, Class of 2021
Jie Sheng
Jennifer Willson, Oceanography, Class of 2023
Helena Pfluger, Oceanography, Class of 2022
Jordan Winter, Oceanography, Class of 2022
Kennedy Cameron, Oceanography, Class of 2021
Amanda Gardiner, Oceanography and Biochemistry, Class of 2021
Hannah Hartman, Oceanography, Class of 2021
Reese Miller, Oceanography, Class of 2023
James Maxwell Kunetz, Oceanography and Drama, Class of 2022
Dylan Vecchione, Oceanography, Class of 2021
Joshua Lai, Oceanography, Class of 2021
Lucy Lipscomb, Oceanography, Class of 2024
Zachary Nachod, Oceanography, Class of 2022
Leo MacLeod, Oceanography and Marine Biology, Class of 2022
Cristian Swift, Oceanography, Class of 2024
Jake Pohs, Oceanography and Marine Biology, Class of 2021
Connor Cheney, Oceanography, Class of 2021
Chris Williams, Oceanography, Class of 2021
Hannah Weinrich, Oceanography, Class of 2023
Denise Devlyn, Oceanography, Class of 2022
Marcus Oman, Oceanography, Class of 2021,
Max Daley Oceanography, class of 2024
Garrett Finucane, Class of 2021
Nallely Krutina, Class of 2021
Mariah Josten, Oceanography, Class of 2021
Milly Marriott-Green, Oceanography and Marine Biology, Class of 2021
Katie Hearther, Oceanography, Marine Biology, Arctic Studies, Class of 2020

**Graduate Students and Postdocs in Solidarity:**
Erik Fredrickson
Emma Myers
Robert Levine
Claire C. McKinley
Laura Crews
Susan Burke
Theresa Whorley
Susan Rundell
Sasha Seroy
Jade Sauvé
Susanna Michael
Zac Cooper
Ethan Campbell
Megan Duffy
Hannah Glover
Amy Wyeth
Rosalind Echols
Hannah Dawson
Katy Christensen
Angie Boysen
Colleen Hoffman