

ROCK CHALK INVISIBLE HAWK

Stand in solidarity with marginalized peoples

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Our demands, our status

Lawrence, Kansas (November 18, 2015) – In spite of the lack of action on the part of administration, we are here to address the needs of marginalized students. Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk (RCIH) is a multicultural coalition of students who bear testimony and witness to the marginalization of students on this campus. We insist upon improving the quality of life for marginalized students. On this campus, there have already been significant efforts to address and eradicate the danger we face. All of these efforts have been led by those who are oppressed. We are impatient. Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk, as a group, is tired of cries for justice being silenced and dismissed. We are here. We are aware. We are powerful and you cannot keep pushing us away.

Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk is a group that recognizes each intersection a marginalized student will face. In the words of Audre Lorde, 'There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.' RCIH is not a single-issue group. We recognize that until the most oppressed are free, none of us are free. That comes with acknowledging that black students must be centered in our movement.

Some students face more risk than others, they are the voices that must not go ignored by the university.

We are aware of the Chancellor's response to the open forum, and we are disappointed that she did not at all address our demonstration or list of demands. She did not respond to us- she followed up on the open forum. In so doing, **Chancellor Gray Little** provided excellent reasoning for our name: in her non-answer, she echoed the sentiments of our invisibility.

RCIH recognizes the Lawrence Feminist Movement as an ally. LFM follows where the invisible hawks lead.

Our 15 demands with explanations included:

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Demands for the University of Kansas Governing Bodies

1. Director of OMA hired by December

Given the climate of campus it is imperative that the Office of Multicultural Affairs has a director to continue the work that needs to be done. They need to be able to connect well with students, understand the current campus climate, have a plan of action to address issues, and have intentional dialogue with administration to create systemic change.

2. Mandatory, intense “inclusion and belonging” training for all levels of students, staff, faculty, and administration

An important part of creating systemic change is educating those around you and equipping them with the training to work with, respect, and support people from all demographics. The most basic level of training would be required cultural competency classes for all students as well as training for staff, faculty, and administration. As your role and involvement with students increases, so does the amount of training needed.

3. Issue Campus Climate Survey by February 2016

This survey is necessary in providing statistical evidence of the problems people face on campus. The analysis of this data is what administration needs to create a plan of action for systemic change. Climate surveys have proven to be effective in the past and the consultant used, Sue Rankin, has recently distributed surveys that are accessible and would only require minor adjustments. If administration is serious about its dedication to creating an inclusive and welcoming campus, then this survey must be released as soon as possible. Students cannot wait.

4. Train and rehire IOA staff and implement accountability measures

There have been many grievances made about the ineffectiveness and bias of the Institution of Opportunity & Access (IOA). To increase transparency and make sure they are adequately doing their job, there must be a review of their training, hiring, and case review processes. Additionally, there need to be clear rules and consequences for acts of racism, sexism, ableism, cis-sexism, islamaphobia, etc. by students, staff, faculty, and administration.

5. Increase consistent hiring of diverse faculty and staff

Numerous studies and longstanding research have shown the benefits to students, faculty, staff and institutions as a whole, increasing a consistent hiring pattern of diversity in all workings of higher education will create a more inclusive campus culture. With these efforts interwoven as the normative demographic, a diverse faculty working in conjunction with diversity policy and

commitment to systemic reform will create a safer environment and begin to show for tangible proof of non-discriminatory actions.

6. Increase the percentage of underrepresented domestic and undocumented students

Administration and admissions have seen a decrease in the recruitment, admittance, and retainment of domestic students of color and undocumented students. As the flagship University it is important that we show our commitment to creating a more diverse campus. To do this it is necessary that they come up with a proactive action plan to increase domestic and undocumented students numbers that includes target areas, percentage goals, and deadlines similar to that of the international student recruitment goals.

7. Immediate amendments to Senate election code

The recent passing of amendments to the Student Senate election code include increasing the spending cap from \$1000 to \$2000 and give specific parameters on when the polls will open and close. To those that are not familiar with senate or running a campaign this will create an extreme disadvantage to students who are already underrepresented on this campus and in the senate chambers. These amendments require that underrepresented students work at least twice as hard to overcome disadvantages placed on them. This governing body was made aware of the harmful effects prior to voting for it, and need to reconsider these amendments because of their commitment to representing the voices of all Jayhawks.

8. Increase aid and assistance to active military and veterans

While KU offers many services to the people who serve our country, there resources are not enough to help fully integrate military personnel back into campus life. They are placed in the non-traditional demographic and their resource offices are understaffed. Additional services need to offer support academically, professionally, and psychologically.

9. Establish team of multicultural counselors to specifically address severe mental illnesses and the needs of students of color by Fall 2016

Right now, students with severe mental illnesses are turned away at CAPS. For example, bipolar disorder is not treated there. This presents a huge problem for students who cannot find treatment elsewhere due to financial/insurance complications. Students with non-conforming gender identities deserve special consideration and counselors must be trained to that fact. People of color and black students must also receive special consideration, as their concerns

are unique to their identities. KU has a responsibility to provide counselors that make every student feel safe.

10. Ban concealed weapons from campus

Previous surveys on conceal and carry have shown that the student body is not in support of having concealed weapons on campus. Both administration and student senate have taken actions to indicate they are also in opposition to conceal and carry. It is important that both groups continue to push for this on a state level and permanently ban weapons on campus. Additionally, concealed weapons will be used to terrorize students of color. Students of color will be, ironically, the most suspected of having weapons. This will create another Stop and Frisk situation (see the law as enacted by New York Police Department).

11. Remove all professors who assault, sexually harass, or engage in abusive relationships with students. Apply this policy retroactively as well, specifically to Dr. Paul Stevens. Immediate expulsion of those that commit sexual assault.

This is a clear policy that assures the safety of all students. Rape is unacceptable. KU must stop assigning essays as punishment. KU must stop allowing rapists/harassers/abusers to circumvent justice. It is not fair for victims to have to face their attackers while trying to learn and earn a degree on campus.

12. Open investigation into Grant, Starling et al. case as hate crime beginning with IOA

We are looking for administration to put pressure on Lawrence Police Department to properly address and investigate the incident as a hate crime and assault, specifically. At this time Lawrence Police Department has filed a report and investigation is underway. Institutional Office of Opportunity and Access (IOA) has a responsibility to any and all perpetrators associated with the Grant & Starling case, away from them on campus as well as ensuring no retaliation from those involved. Due to the nature of this incident, it is preeminent that these individuals are also protected to have a candor opportunity at the University of Kansas.

13. Reopen investigation into the murder of Rick "Tiger" Dowdell

In the 60's and 70's Lawrence racial climate was one of intolerance and pure hatred of true equity for black students. Rick "Tiger" Dowdell was a leader and advocate for black liberation during his time at Lawrence High School and KU. During the summer of 1970 he was chased and shot in the back of the head by a member of the Lawrence Police Department. Like many black people killed by police, his case was never resolved and the officer was not convicted. It is

imperative that we hold the Lawrence community as accountable for its actions against students as we would our own faculty and administration.

14. Establish Multicultural Student Government independent of current University of Kansas Student Senate

It has been made clear that the University of Kansas Student Government is not actively supporting and advocating for multicultural students. Despite months of conversations and trainings on cultural competency, some executive board members and senators have silenced minorities inside and outside the senate chambers.

This MSG body would provide a safe space, resources, events such as a multicultural orientation, and many other services. This body would oversee the MEF budget and a portion of student fees to accomplish its goals. Additionally, it would work to make sure multicultural students have representation in all spaces on campus. This means having access to various committees and boards, with rights and voting power within university governance equal to that of the Student Senate.

15. Thorough plan of action from Administration by January 19, 2016

While it may not be 100% obtainable to have all of these completed by the spring 2016 semester, it is imperative that the administration and governing bodies show, thorough actions to resolve longstanding issues on campus. It should include details on who will be in these discussions, progress timelines, and deadlines for completion. Students have continued to heir grievances about negative experiences on this campus. It is not a question about whether administration cares, but how much. Plans of long and short term action are necessary in truly creating a campus that is welcoming and inclusive of all Jayhawks.

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