



### **KUSSW Dean's Office Memo Responding to Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk Demands**

On November 23, 2015, three SSW students and members of Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk posted the following list of demands on office doors at the School of Social Welfare. I appreciate the concerns of RCIH and all our School's groups advocating for dialogue and action for change. As Dean, I have responded to each of the demands below. KU SSW's Faculty Executive Committee and Leadership team are also reviewing and will respond with any additional information in the near future.

#### **Demands for the School of Social Welfare**

1. Publicly release a statement showing that you and the school stand in solidarity with Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk. It is written in the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) Code of Ethics to be leaders and advocates of social justice. Standing in solidarity with RCIH is mandated by this Code. Not adhering to this demand is a direct violation of the Code of Ethics.

RESPONSE: Statements were issued by: 1) the School of Social Welfare's B.S.W. Student Group; 2) Ph.D. students; 3) the SSW Faculty Executive Committee; 4) the Office of the Dean; 5) and the SSW Center on Mental Health Research and Innovation stating that KU SSW community members from these groups support students of color and the goal of eradicating racism and discrimination on campus, which is consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics. Some of these statements voiced support for Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk specifically and some did not. There are a number of student groups advocating for campus reforms (RCIH, the Black Student Union, TEAM Jayhawk, among others). The Dean's office supports all students who are advocating for eradicating racism and discrimination and will work with them to create policies that support minority students.

2. Organize and implement a faculty-wide cultural competency and microaggression training program geared towards your students of color and the problems they face on campus everyday.

RESPONSE: Specific ways to address this recommendation are being considered by KU SSW's Faculty Executive Committee. It is also being addressed by the KU Diversity Task Force appointed by the Chancellor. We will make an announcement by February 15, 2016 addressing the status of cultural competency and microaggression training.

3. Provide resources to your students (specifically those of color) and be able to accommodate students who want to promote social justice and activism. Integrate activism, advocacy, and community organizing into classroom curriculums rather than focusing specifically on practice.

RESPONSE: We want to hear your ideas about the specific resources and accommodations that are needed for students, and hope the community meeting will be one place for this conversation. We have a few initial responses to this demand.

Activism, advocacy, and community organizing are integrated in the KU SSW curriculum. Our Social Work Administrative and Advocacy Practice concentration in the M.S.W. program is aimed at social service administration, social policy development and social advocacy. B.S.W. students receive a generalist curriculum as mandated by our accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education. BSW senior level courses, such as Social Policy and Program Analysis II (SW 621), focus on advocacy and activism, and Community and Organizational Dynamics and Human Behavior (SW 532) focuses on community organizing as a form of practice.

An array of resources is available for all students and for students of color. For example, the KU SSW awarded \$276,000 worth of student scholarships in Fall of 2015, specifically targeting students who are most in financial need. We actively participate in KU's Multicultural Scholars program, which has been highly successful in providing support for students of color. Support for student travel to conferences is provided if the student is making a presentation. These are a few examples of student support. We would love to have more resources to support student scholarships, and the Dean's Advisory Committee and our School's Development Director are always looking for donors who can help to increase funds for student scholarships. Students may suggest other types of resources that they need by contacting the Faculty Executive Committee with specific ideas.

The KU SSW's Office of Academic Programs and our Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Dr. Steve Kapp, are responsible for overseeing student issues. If students who want to promote social justice and activism have ideas for special projects or initiatives that are compatible with the School's educational mission, they should speak to their instructors, Dr. Kapp, or Kristin Trendel.

4. Be more flexible with and accessible to students of color with mental illnesses. We believe students with mental illnesses should be able to receive an education and graduate with a degree. Faculty and administration within the school of social welfare must work with these students in order to create a plan for their success, rather than shutting them out.

RESPONSE: The Dean's office fully agrees that a student with a mental illness should have the same opportunities to receive an education and graduate with a degree from KU SSW as a

student without a mental illness. Students with disabilities, including mental illnesses and learning disorders, can request and receive appropriate accommodations through the AAAC department of the University. AAAC works with instructors and advisors from the Office of Academic Programs. SSW academic advisors and program directors (Dr.'s Petr, Bacallao, and Scanlon) regularly help these students to create plans for their success and SSW will continue to do so. Students with concerns may also file grievances that are reviewed by the Faculty Executive Committee and the Dean.

5. We believe that holding a race forum is not conducive to the needs of students of color. Instead, organize a meeting between social welfare students of color and the administrative heads of the department before the Chancellor releases her statement (the sooner, the better) to hear out and discuss our needs. If the meeting is scheduled during class, be sure to excuse interested students from their classes so they may attend without consequence.

RESPONSE: The administrative team of the School welcomes a meeting with social welfare students of color to discuss their needs and looks forward to ongoing conversations about how the KU SSW can continue to make improvements. The KU SSW Forum on Racism and Discrimination on Campus will be held on November 30<sup>th</sup> to hear all voices in the School community and to begin to identify action steps that can be moved forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Smokowski, Ph.D.

Dean and Professor