

# #BlackAtAppstate

Monday, July 6, 2020

To Chancellor Sheri Everts, Appalachian State University Administration, All Student Affairs Personnel, and to the Board of Trustees:

We, the Black students of Appalachian State University, are writing to you today with deep concern and exasperation. In our time at the university, we have noticed a profound contradiction between App State's mission, and its treatment of its students from marginalized groups. We are a collective of current students and recent alumni who have served in leadership in some capacity on App State's campus. We have attended every town hall, been a member of every committee, task force, and panel. In return we have watched our fellow students, faculty, staff, and other administrators be silenced, threatened, and ultimately forced into leaving App State's campus to protect their own well-being. This should not be the norm. We are tired of our work and basic demands being ignored and neglected. For years, the current Administration has attempted to hide this reality by creating letters and statements that ignore the trauma and violence that their most marginalized students - Black Students - experience on and off campus. Throughout the last several weeks, statements from the Chancellor's office have been comprised of lies and deceptive language that disrespect the Black students that have fought for change and have been directly ignored by the current and past administrations. This disrespect also encompasses the policies that were implemented by Black students and supportive staff and faculty over the last decade that have been rolled back.

Appalachian State University's Administration, which includes Chancellor Sheri Everts, must respond to these demands with a statement by July 10, 2020 at 5pm. Every member of the current administration has been sent this letter, as well as, the Chief Diversity Officer. **ALL** of the demands must be fully implemented within the next 36 months starting from the time a response is issued. These demands have been strenuously vetted by various students, alumni, and faculty that are not to be changed, edited, or negotiated. In the light of our current climate, if our demands are not met, we will take appropriate nonviolent actions which will disrupt **ALL** university operations and escalate until our demands are met. This response is not to be inclusive of redirective tactics including, but not limited to, replying with a list of individuals who could meet our needs - this approach does not help students. Instead immediate action must be taken. If other statements from the Chancellor's office are issued before recognizing our list of demands, we will see this as an act of non-compliance.

We **will not** hesitate to contact the state-wide media sources to publicize our movement and our demands and bring to light the treatment of black students, faculty, and staff at Appalachian State University. In the time between this release of student demands and the deadline we have given App State's administration, we will document our actions throughout social media using the hashtag **#BlackAtAppstate**. We invite current and past students to join us in using #BlackAtAppstate to share their experiences of injustice and further marginalization at the university.

Sincerely,

Concerned Black Mountaineers

# OUR DEMANDS

## Appalachian State University

### Admissions, Faculty, Student-Retention, and Support

**WE DEMAND** mandatory bias training for every member of faculty or staff who have any contact with current students, prospective students, or alumni.

*Since the elimination of the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Compliance (EDC) the bias incident reporting protocol has been neglected and metrics relating to diversity and inclusion have painted an incomplete picture of equity on our campus. For this reason, we are requesting a comprehensive, independent, third-party assessment in order to elucidate the experiences of marginalized students, staff, and faculty. **WE DEMAND** that the University commission an unbiased comprehensive report compiled by an independent third party regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion that spans all aspects of the University. This report should be accessible and promoted to students, faculty, staff, and alumni. This third-party company/entity should be selected by a committee of students, alumni members, staff, and faculty.*

**WE DEMAND** the University increase the representation of Black and brown individuals within faculty, staff, and the Board of Trustee membership

- A. Concretize the university's commitment to increasing recruitment and retention by committing within the Strategic Plan that must be submitted by the end of 2021, to increase the percentage of Black and Brown tenured-track faculty, upper administration and full-time staff by no less than 25% by 2023
- B. All departments will outline and make public how their hiring and tenure processes work. Because professors of color are often called upon for mentorship and service work, tenure processes should recognize these forms of labor.
- C. The Office of Human Resources partners with Black Faculty Staff Association (BFSA) with developing resources that aid in the recruitment and retention of Black faculty/staff.

**WE DEMAND** that the university implement exit interviews from students, faculty, and staff of color regarding their university experience. The data compiled will be used to enhance the experience of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) at the university. Additionally, the data should be compiled into a report that will be published to the Appalachian State University community.

## **Health & Well-Being of Students of Color**

**WE DEMAND** that the University hire Black and LGBTQIA+ affirming medical professional in at least the following roles: Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Office Staff/Support, Counselors, and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)

- A. The university should invest in TeleHealth services that aid and support our vision of increasing accessibility to Black Medical Professionals in order to prioritize student health.
- B. TeleHealth should be covered by the student fees/existing Student Health Care plans to prevent an excessive financial burden on students.

## **Curriculum**

**WE DEMAND**, greater inclusion of Black and brown scholars and the contributions of people of color in ALL disciplines. All program areas within the University should conduct a review of their curricula and incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy.

**WE DEMAND** that our University allocate additional funding and support to faculty and staff of color researching social-justice, anti-Semitism, and anti-racist work.

**WE DEMAND** the creation of a Social Justice designation requirement for all general education. We are also demanding that the General Education committee meet and discuss recommendations for the courses.

## **University Commitment to Change in Organizational Culture**

**WE DEMAND** more transparent, proactive, and direct communication from the administration on emerging issues. This includes notifying the student body, alumni, faculty, and staff on the current administration's stance and actions on issues directly affecting marginalized identities.

**WE DEMAND** that the University continues the practice of accepting students according to strong qualifications regardless of standardized testing during the admissions process in wake of post-COVID-19, as high scores on these tests correlate most closely with higher household income, disproportionately benefiting wealthier, white students. Following in the steps of Wake Forest University, Appalachian State University must become accessible to students who are presently marginalized from attending.

**WE DEMAND** that athletics immediately draft and institute action plans that focus on education, retention, and mentorship in order to end the exploitation of Black student-athletes. Starting with hiring more coaches, faculty, staff, trainers, and administration of color.

**WE DEMAND** that the board of Student Support Services (SSS) create and bolster support resources for Black and Brown students specifically. Including but not limited to:

- A. Provide resources and support for students of color in career development and better prepare them for graduate school(s).
- B. Create an email listserv for Black and Brown students to receive notifications about events and support opportunities.
- C. Implement mandatory culturally responsive training for all Student Affairs professionals in order to better advise and serve students.

**WE DEMAND** the University reestablish the position of Associate Vice-Chancellor of Equity

- A. The Associate Vice-Chancellor of Equity should directly report to and add capacity to the office of the Chief Diversity Officer of the institution.
- B. Going forward, we demand that the organizational structure of the Chief Diversity Officer consist of governing the following: The Title IX Office, The Associate Vice-Chancellor of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Compliance, and the staff of both offices.

**WE DEMAND** the creation of an accessible and publicly known Bias Incident Reporting Protocol for student complaints about biased comments, attitudes, and actions made by students, staff, faculty, and administrators. This protocol should offer transparent action items and guidance on how bias incidents may be investigated and remedied.

- A. Bias Incident Reports will be submitted to the Office of the Associate Vice-Chancellor of Equity, Diversity, and Compliance. Timely follow-up is required.
- B. In addition, we demand that these reports are fielded by Maxient.
- C. We demand that information regarding the purpose of and access link to this form be included in the syllabus of each academic offering from the university with the same regard as ADA Compliance.
- D. We demand that this Bias Reporting Incident Form be marketed in ALL housing, recruitment/retention initiatives, and programs.

**WE DEMAND** that the Student Government Association adds the position of Director of Diversity & Inclusion to the Constitution of the Student Government Association of Appalachian State University.

**WE DEMAND** that the university institute the following Intercultural Student Affairs (ISA) Umbrella Initiatives:

- A. Create and fund a peer educator program for social justice and anti-racism.
- B. Create a Social Justice Center with a mission of providing an anti-racist space for action. Consider whether this would be better housed in conjunction with Intercultural Student Affairs (ISA) or separate from ISA. Ask qualified faculty to rotate office hours each week in the Center.
- C. Revamp ISA to receive additional funding, and additional staff to be more responsive to the needs of students, along with receiving more institutional support for student-centered programs and initiatives intended to enhance the student experience for marginalized groups. Work with SGA to add an additional \$2 fee to student fees directed towards Diversity & Inclusion initiatives earmarked for students and to be managed by the ISA Office.

**WE DEMAND** that Appalachian State University adds an initiative to its Strategic Plan that commits the university to make a conscious effort of supporting marginalized black-owned businesses when accepting/negotiating bids and, or negotiating external contracts for university services and needs below or equal to \$5,000. In addition, **WE DEMAND** that there is an annual report of contracted services allotted to marginalized-owned (i.e. businesses owned by Women, Black-Indigenous and Persons of Color-Owned) businesses to display the institution's commitment to supporting and uplifting marginalized groups.

**WE DEMAND** the formation of a menu committee with Appalachian State University's Campus Dining to plan out menus a year ahead, looking at trends, collaborating with near-by businesses to offer students culturally authentic food by the academic year 2021-2022. In addition, receive input from students when adding culturally authentic food to campus dining on a rotation and markets. Serving culturally authentic food on campus would expose students to cultures that they might not have previously experienced. It is important to note that culturally authentic food should not be appropriated or tokenized.

**WE DEMAND** that the University takes a public stance regarding tuition equity for undocumented students.

## **Campus Culture and Leadership**

**WE DEMAND** Appalachian Popular Programming Society (APPS) should intentionally gear events toward students of Color by collaborating with cultural clubs and organizations to bring

a minimum of four or more culturally relevant entertainment ( musicians, comedians, film series, etc.) per academic year.

- A. We require APPS to consult with the respective cultural organizations on campus: Asian Student Association (ASA), Black Student Association (BSA), Latin Hispanic Alliance (LSA), and the Native American Student Association (NASA) representatives when planning/facilitating cultural programming.
- B. We demand that representatives from the four organizations: ASA, BSA, HSA, and NASA have seats from each organization appointed for their collaboration in ongoing planning for Cultural Awareness and Student Engagement (CASE) programs.
- C. Student Engagement and Leadership/Campus Activities staff should be trained to properly screen events to identify potentially racist and/or culturally insensitive events.

**WE DEMAND** that Campus Activities and Code of Student Conduct policies include severe discipline and educational intervention for all clubs and organizations affiliated with the university that host culturally insensitive events. Furthermore, the student conduct board should increase its racial and ethnic diversity by advertising positions on the board to organizations serving marginalized and underrepresented students. This includes, but is not limited to, the Black Student Association, the Black Student-Athlete Association, Appalachian Social Justice Educators, etc.

## **Endowment/Scholarship**

**WE DEMAND** that the University increase the level of marketing regarding its diversity scholarship opportunities to incoming and ongoing students at the university. In addition, we demand that the university cultivate more scholarship opportunities for marginalized people that are not directly allotted by a merit-based scholarship designation.

*Past and Existing diversity and inclusion committees have historically been a place for conversation. This is a time for action and implementation.* **WE DEMAND** the creation of a standing committee charged with accountable implementation of equity initiatives. This committee should consist of nine individuals including Black students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

**WE DEMAND that all of our demands be fully implemented within the next 36 months and that Chancellor Sheri Everts give us an official response no later than Friday, July 10, 2020, 5 PM EST.**