



## **California State University, Fullerton Response to the Black Student Union**

October 25, 2019

On Monday, October 21, 2019, the California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) Black Student Union (BSU) held a Town Hall to discuss both the university's campus climate — specifically as it relates to the Black experience — and an act of hate by a member of an on-campus fraternity that precipitated the gathering. Immediately prior to and again at the conclusion of the Town Hall, the BSU issued 12 demands that, as we understand them, aim to provide a more welcoming and authentically equitable academic environment for all Black Titans; the 12<sup>th</sup> demand initially being that the university respond thereto by noon, Friday, October 25.

Below is the university's response to the BSU demands, which in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation, we will refer to as goals. Our response also provides some contextual background about the university's existing work in this arena, the successes and failures of that work, and the wide-ranging ways in which the institution aspires to answer the timely and necessary call put forth by the BSU.

### **Background**

For the majority of its 62-year history, CSUF has been a strong advocate for and a nationally recognized leader of diversity and inclusion efforts, both at home and throughout the system in which it is now the largest of 23 campuses. As the only CSU in Orange County, a service region that was more than 90% Caucasian the year the institution was founded, this journey has not been without challenges and, at times, suffering. The Titans bearing the brunt of this adversity and pain are most often — if not always — marginalized communities; faculty, staff, and students who are too often impacted by the intolerance and systemic racism that, because of its pervasiveness in our society, can sometimes rear its head on our campus.

As painful as these moments are, students have always played a central role in both helping the community heal and working with the university in its ongoing mission to make real and measurable progress on these issues. In this way, the BSU's call to action represents yet another milestone of our students wielding the power of their voice as a catalyst for change in our ongoing journey toward inclusive excellence.

The university is proud to shine a light on that voice with the below response to the BSU. And, to the extent that we are financially and legally empowered to do so, we are equally proud to offer our unwavering commitment to work with the BSU and all Titans to transform this document into living, breathing manifestations of the goals it represents.

With that promise, we — President Virjee and each member of the President's Cabinet — proudly stand with the BSU and with all Black faculty, staff, and students; not just during this difficult time, but at all times and in every way possible. We vow to continuously and

collaboratively engage in this work and elevate our aspirations with each segment of progress we make – now and in the weeks, months, and years to come.

Together, we can and will build and enhance a campus community in which all Black Titans feel welcomed, supported, safe, and on an equitable path to academic, social, and professional success.

This response represents a down payment upon our promise to help us get there.

**Below are the BSU's 12 Goals and our response to each.**

**1. Allocation of \$150K to fully fund the Afrikan Black Coalition (ABC) Conference.**

- a. We are excited about and supportive of the ABC Conference coming to CSUF. We are committed to working with ABC to make the conference a success for all involved.
- b. The conference organizer has informed us that a total funding of \$90-113K would cover the cost of the conference.
- c. We also understand that ASI has already committed to provide \$10K in funding for the conference.
- d. The university is committed to contributing up to an additional \$75K to fund the conference. In addition, the university is currently providing two student leads to organize and facilitate the logistics for this student-led conference.
- e. We commit to seeking additional funds, as needed, from other participating CSU campuses.

**2. An aggressive recruitment of Black faculty and staff in disciplines and departments outside of the African-American Studies Department...;an increase in the support for the African-American Studies Department as a whole...; at least 6% faculty in tenured track positions on campus be Black-identified within the next four years, with each year steadily increasing by 1.5%.**

- i. **An aggressive recruitment of Black faculty and staff in disciplines and departments outside of the African-American Studies Department.**
  - a. We agree to engage in aggressive recruiting of Black faculty and staff (both inside and) outside of the African-American Studies Department.
  - b. Increasing faculty diversity across our campus is a high priority for the institution. Our new five-year Strategic Plan reflects that truth, and we will continue to

aggressively recruit Black faculty and staff in disciplines and departments across campus as outlined in that plan (Goal 3, Objective 3 and 4).

- c. We recently made several structural changes to recruit and support faculty of color, including Black faculty. These changes include creating the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programs (DIEP) in 2017, and moving faculty recruitment and retention to DIEP in 2018. To further those efforts, in 2019, we created a new position - the Faculty Diversity Officer (FDO), whose job is to focus on faculty recruitment and retention from a diversity-minded perspective. The FDO has developed a new, research-based faculty recruitment and hiring training program, which he facilitated for over 200 faculty, including members of every search committee participating in the faculty hiring process this year. Various Colleges within the university have also taken on faculty diversity initiatives at the college level. We hope and expect to see significant dividends in the recruitment of diverse faculty, including Black faculty, from this effort.
- d. We will continue and enhance those efforts as follows:
  - i. Intensify and expand our efforts to recruit at institutions and in communities of color, working to contact and engage in both short- and long-term relationship building with Black candidates in academic institutions as they seek future employment. More specifically, we will continue to enhance our outreach with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Black doctoral associations to identify candidates for faculty positions. Building these relationships has taken some time, but we expect to see a yield on these efforts by an increase in Black candidates applying in the coming recruitment cycles.
  - ii. Require diverse recruiting pools that include candidates that are reflective of our campus community, including specifically Black candidates, and require the dissolution and reconstitution of recruiting pools that are not diverse and reflective of our campus, including our Black community.
  - iii. Engage our campus community — faculty, administrators and staff — as ambassadors and advocates in the recruiting and retention of our Black candidates.
- ii. **An increase in the support for the African-American Studies (AAS) Department as a whole.**
  - a. We agree to increase support for the African-American Studies (AAS) Department, which is an important and integral part of our campus. We make this commitment at both the college and university level.
  - b. That support will include assisting in highlighting the AAS program at both the college and university level; working to assist the AAS program to

identify research assets to be leveraged by faculty, staff, and students; promoting our AAS faculty in the national academy; and working to increase inter-disciplinary activity between the AAS program and other programs on campus.

c. We will also meet with the AAS Department to define other ways in which to increase support for the department and its academic programs.

iii. **At least 6% faculty in a tenured track position on campus, be Black-identified within the next four years, with each year steadily increasing by 1.5%.**

a. We agree with the goal of increasing both the number and percentage of Black tenured and tenure-track faculty on campus, and will continue to strive to do so.

b. While federal and state laws prevent us from setting quotas such as the 6% and 1.5% referenced, moving forward we plan to make further structural changes, as well as update our faculty search policies and faculty recruitment efforts to increase the number of Black-identified and other underrepresented faculty. See all references to recruiting practices above.

**3. The “Black Student Success Initiative” Plan drafted by ASI be implemented in its entirety.**

a. If by the “Black Student Success Initiative” the BSU is referring to the ASI Resolution in Support of Black Student Success at [CSUF], we agree that the steps outlined in that resolution are both important and essential.

b. We have made progress in implementing a number of the items outlined in the ASI initiative, and we commit to fully implement all such items.

**4. The hiring of two full-time Black psychologists at CSUF.**

a. We recognize that the mental health needs of all students are both great and growing. We also recognize that many of our students, including those from our Black community, face unique challenges and have needs that, in some cases, could potentially be served especially well by a mental health professional who is Black.

b. We recognize that it is essential that we provide both emergency and sporadic services for our students’ mental health care needs, and that we must also act as a bridge to long-term service needs.

c. While it would be unlawful to limit our search only to Black psychologists (or psychologists of any other race, nationality, or ethnicity), we have made some progress in this area through our commitment to recruiting and retaining diverse faculty and staff. Counseling and Psychological Services has a therapist designated to serve as a liaison to the MSI program as well as the AARC.

Although the AARC liaison position has been vacant, CAPS recently hired a new therapist to fill this role with an anticipated start date in November.

- d. We will begin recruitment for other positions in the spring semester, and in so doing will work to assure a diverse pool of candidates reflective of our campus, including Black candidates.

**5. An annual Scholarship budget of \$250K, to be raised and funded by the President's office and disbursed by the AARC to go to Black students with the highest need.**

- a. We agree that we have many students from historically underserved communities, including the Black community, who are struggling financially and in need.
- b. We are committed to continually increasing both the numbers and dollars to be used for scholarships to support students in need.
- c. That said, California law (Proposition 209) prohibits the university from raising and/or distributing funds to students based on race (or any other immutable characteristic). Accordingly, as a university, we could not create or expend such a fund. However, we are open to exploring available options that do not violate the law.
- d. Regardless, we are committed to increasing the financial aid available to our students of color and our first-generation students through programs such as the Male Success Initiative, Tuffy's Graduation Scholars, Guardian Scholars, etc. We will continue to focus on raising funds for those programs with the intent and expectation that in doing so, we will lawfully and intentionally benefit our students from historically underserved communities, and especially our Black students.

**6. An allocation of \$100K for the creation of a peer-led mentoring program through the AARC.**

- a. We recognize that Peer Mentoring programs provide in and out of classroom support to help students academically and socially integrate to Cal State Fullerton, and we are committed to exploring and developing such programs.
- b. Student Affairs will work with DIRC to design and implement such a peer-led mentoring program in our DIRC centers, with the goal of implementation for the 20-21 school year.
- c. In designing and implementing that program, the Director of DIRC will consult and work with the Coordinators of each of the DIRC Centers, including the AARC. See Goal 11.

**7. A letter from President Framroze Virjee for the advancement of AB 1460, which will make Ethnic Studies a CSU requirement.**

- a. Ethnic Studies is an important element in the academic curriculum of any undergraduate institution's educational offerings. That importance is magnified by the mission of CSUF to create graduates who are culturally agile and understand the value of diversity and collaboration.
- b. The Ethnic Studies curriculum is also essential to assuring that we understand concepts of discrimination, privilege, and power and how they have affected our history, so that we do not repeat those same mistakes.
- c. We are committed to supporting our Ethnic Studies departments, and to the development of culturally aware and agile graduates, as well as a community of inclusion and collaboration on campus. In fact, this commitment is specifically highlighted in our current Strategic Plan. (Goal 1, Objective 3; Goal 3)
- d. That said, under well-defined and long-standing principles of shared governance and shared decision making, decisions regarding curriculum and graduation requirements are the exclusive purview of the faculty – here at CSUF, the Academic Senate. It is for this reason that the Systemwide Academic Senate of the CSU expressly opposes AB 1460.
- e. If we, as an academic institution, cede to the legislature the authority to micromanage and dictate CSU graduation requirements, then we cede the authority and responsibility of the academy.
- f. We would also cede all ability as an individual campus to decide what our graduation requirements, including any ethnic study or diversity and inclusion requirement would be. That is ceding all that makes CSUF unique in the system and as a university.
- g. AB 1460 also limits the area of study exclusively to Black, Asian, Latinx and Native American studies. The expressed omission of our LGBTQ community, women and gender studies, and other historically marginalized communities is as stunning as it is stark.
- h. For these reasons, President Virjee is already on record as opposing AB 1460. That said, our Academic Senate is currently in the process of discussing and making recommendations to the Systemwide AS regarding how best to incorporate an Ethnic Studies requirement into the CSU graduation requirements, and in particular at CSUF. We are committed to supporting the Academic Senate in that process and President Virjee will write a letter in support of that process.

**8. Phi Sigma Kappa Fraternity be suspended indefinitely due to the disregard of campus values.**

- a. The CSUF disciplinary and review process for student conduct strives to hold students accountable for their behavior, be educational in nature, and protect the rights of all individuals involved.
- b. All students and student organizations are entitled to due process. That due process includes a specific process for investigating and evaluating the circumstances surrounding the relevant incident – who was involved, who had knowledge, who allowed or enabled it to occur.
- c. As an academic institution dedicated to teaching and learning, in conjunction with that due process, notions of history, accepted responsibility and restorative justice are also relevant.
- d. Should the existing student organization review process determine that this or any other student organization violated any campus conduct rules or policies, appropriate action including restorative justice will be taken commensurate to the conduct violation.

**9. The University to amend the rules and policies of expulsion regarding student life and leadership at CSUF, to include racial and discrimination against all students, specifically Black students.**

- a. We agree to examine and amend as appropriate our current campus rules and policies to strengthen and clarify them to more clearly prohibit racially discriminatory conduct of any kind, including against Black students.
- b. We will do so to the full extent permitted by law and CSU policies.

**10. A Black floor in campus housing within the construction of the newly implemented residential halls that will ensure the safety and community protection of Black students.**

- a. We are committed to providing a vibrant and safe student life experience for all our students in our residence halls, including our Black students.
- b. The current conceptual student residence halls proposed for construction south of the Gastronome is still in the preconstruction stage and has not yet received official approval from the Board of Trustees.
- c. If by a “Black floor” in campus housing, the intent is a housing floor that is limited to Black students, that is not possible because to do so would be unlawful segregation and discrimination prohibited by law. We can explore the creation of a themed floor that is open to both Black students and all allies as part of our planning process. Much like our current LGBTQ-themed floor, such a floor would be lawful and we commit to examining the feasibility and demand for such

a floor when the new student housing comes on line. We look forward to working with the BSU to support the safety and inclusion of Black students in on-campus housing.

### **11. Robust diversity training for Fraternity and Sorority Life.**

- a. We agree to implement a robust diversity training for all fraternities and sororities as a condition of their affiliation on campus.
- b. Student Life and Leadership will conduct a comprehensive review of current training programs for fraternities, including ways to expand inclusion, diversity, and equity training as a condition of their affiliation on campus.
- c. Student Life and Leadership, in collaboration with DIRC, will review and enhance inclusivity training within the new-member education program.

### **Conclusion**

As alluded to in the opening, this document is not intended to be a final response to the BSU’s articulated goals nor the end of an ongoing campus conversation regarding eliminating discrimination and promoting diversity and inclusion, especially for our Black faculty, staff, and students. Instead, it is a launching point of action items designed to take on incredibly complex and important issues that will take time to address. There are, no doubt, many more conversations to be had, much great work to be done, and likely several more action items to come. Again, we — President Virjee and the entire President’s Cabinet — commit to those conversations, that work, and a future of full inclusion, authentic opportunity, and equitable success for all students, including specifically our Black students.

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