

URGENT ASKS FOR INCREASED DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT DICKINSON COLLEGE, ON BEHALF OF DICKINSON COLLEGE STUDENTS  
via the Why We Wear Black Movement

January 31, 2016

Chartered in 1783, Dickinson College was intended to be an institution that would foster the educated citizenry that Benjamin Rush knew America needed in order to remain a new nation worthy of its liberties.

A liberty cap, a telescope, and an open bible are symbols of the college's mission to offer students a useful and progressive education in the **arts** and **sciences**, one grounded in a strong sense of **civic duty**.

While all of us here today not only benefit from a Dickinson education, we believe in a Dickinson education. Unfortunately, there are some values of the college and our community that barely make it off the page.

We are specifically concerned with the state of inclusion on our campus and the measures taken or not yet taken to uphold the values of the college in this respect.

As we share and explore these concerns tonight, we ask everyone in attendance to consider the following questions:

1. Who is a Dickinson experience for?
2. How can we hold one another accountable to Ben Rush's concept of active citizenry?
3. What is global engagement without engagement across the global perspectives here on our campus?

**WHY WE WEAR BLACK MOVEMENT: *Name changed to The Student Liberation Movement***

This localized movement is part of a long trajectory of student activism, such as the agency of Esther Popel Shaw, The Congress of African Students' Manifesto, and the Die-in that occurred last year.

Last semester, Dickinsonians were adamant about sharing their experiences as people of color, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, women, international students, and other underrepresented and marginalized groups on campus.

Their personal stories reflect escalating sentiments of a lack of support from the college, especially in issues pertaining to racial and ethnic identities at Dickinson. In the spirit of national student mobilization demanding social/racial equity, the "Why We Wear Black" organizers intend to hold Dickinson accountable to its students of color.

As the "Why We Wear Black" organizers evaluated peer input from the Call to Action Dialogue, an online space was made to update the community on the process of drafting the

demands/concerns/recommendations and ask for possible assistance as we fight for the voices of Dickinson students to be heard.

## **PROCESS**

During the Thanksgiving Dinner last semester, three students stood in the dining hall and held a demonstration in order to bring awareness to the many issues that marginalized students on this campus face. This demonstration was meant to spark a reaction to not only the students, but also staff, faculty and administration.

The next day there was a call to action meeting in ATS where over 700 students, faculty, and staff shared their grievances regarding the campus climate at that time. During the meeting, we asked students to write down their concerns and recommendations to improve inclusion on campus. Over winter break, we went through all of the written concerns and divided them into categories. From there, we researched each topic to complete concise and fully thought out recommendations to present to the appropriate committees during the open forum being held at ATS on the evening of January 31.

### **FOCUSED CONCERNS:**

#### **Training and Development**

#### **Student Campus Resources**

#### **Curriculum and Classroom Experience**

#### **Faculty Diversity**

### **A. Training and Development**

#### **First-Year Program**

Staff and faculty training on diversity/inclusivity

Safety Violence and Sexual assault

We ask that faculty, administrators and officers in student organizations participate in diversity training programs applicable to their respective areas of leadership. This training should educate participants on how to:

- a) Engage students in dialogue across difference.
- b) Facilitate discussions on the intersection of power with race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, and class.
- c) Coherently respond to and responsibly resolve issues concerning the identity markers above.
- d) Create and maintain an environment of mutual respect and appreciation.
- e) Review their own administrations, departments, committees, and organizations for bias and/or discriminatory practices.

### **B. Student Campus Resources**

Mental Health Resources

Staff Diversity

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance

We ask that Dickinson College hire and retain staff of color in the Wellness Center, Biddle House, and Landis House. In addition, we ask for:

- a) Frequent disability awareness training for faculty, where they are provided strategies for classroom instruction. While we understand that this already exists, we think the frequency at which faculty are asked to attend the workshop should be reevaluated to fit the needs of students with disabilities and disability services.
- b) Familiarize all staff members in the Wellness Center, Biddle House and Landis House with anti-oppressive practice in order to thereby assist students struggling with issues of oppression relating to race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, etc.
- c) Develop a program to reduce the stigma on mental illness and otherwise making the Wellness/Counseling Center and other available supportive resources more accessible to students, particularly to students of color.
- d) Gender Neutral Restrooms
  - i) We ask for a minimum of one gender neutral bathroom per building.
  - ii) All single-toilet public restrooms should be made non-gender specific.
  - iii) Signs for dual-gender restrooms should be changed to non-gender specific signs (ie. Library, Kaufman Hall).

### **C. Curriculum**

Distribution Requirements  
Student Experience

We ask that the college make the following changes related to the student academic experience:

- a) Mandate and enforce descriptions of courses in the catalog.
- b) Incorporate civic education in all First-Year Programs (First-Year Seminar).

### **D. Faculty Diversity**

Hiring and Retention Rate

We acknowledge that a lack of diversity in the faculty affects the student experience at Dickinson, and ask that the college make the following changes relating to the hiring and retention rate of diverse faculty:

- a) Institutional membership to the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity by the beginning of Fall 2016.
- b) Continue to pursue funding to receive C3 Post-Doctoral fellows.
- c) We ask that Dickinson require all departments to add a sentence in their job listings encouraging professors of color and women to apply.

In creating these demands, we understand we are not representative of the entire Dickinson community and that these demands will not address all of the needs of the community, but after reading the concerns you all gave to us, we feel these demands were significant in elevating problems of diversity and inclusion that are plaguing our community at this moment.

Sincerely,

The Why We Wear Black Organizers

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Alyson McAtee '18

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Bria Antoine '16

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