In Response to Racism and Anti-Blackness at Providence College: Demands for Redress

Presented by:
The Coalition Against Racism, Women Empowered, Society Organized Against Racism, Brotherhood, and The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People of Providence College.

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Dear President Shanley:

On behalf of multicultural and marginalized students, faculty and staff who are a part of the Friar community at Providence College, we present a set of demands that are designed to create a more racially diverse, inclusive and academically excellent community. The College, to date, has failed to embrace its mission, which reads in part, "Providence College seeks to reflect the rich diversity of the human family. Following the example of St. Dominic, who extended a loving embrace to all, it welcomes qualified men and women of every background and affirms the God-given dignity, freedom, and equality of each person." The painful testimonies of students who have been racially profiled and discriminated against by faculty, security, staff and students, have been systematically ignored. As members of this community we seek to work, in collaboration with others, to address the longstanding and historical concerns raised by multicultural students and faculty. We write out of concern not only for those of us on our campus, but also for those in the larger community who are impacted by the practices and processes of the institution. In order to achieve equity we must first recognize the miseducation of some of our students, faculty and staff, and then take the necessary steps to correct where we fall short in creating a community that reflects our College's mission. Our demands require a blueprint action plan by January 11, 2016. Our demands include: an Inclusive Curriculum, Vice President for Inclusion and Diversity, Title VI Coordinator, the establishment of a Center for the Study of the Black Diaspora, and the establishment of a new Multicultural Center in Moore Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Coalition Against Racism, Women Empowered, Society Organized Against Racism, Brotherhood, and The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People of Providence College

Article I: Inclusive Curriculum

Section A: Providence College faculty and Staff Cross-Cultural Competence Training:
Creating an inclusive cross-cultural endowed community through cultural competency training that includes the following concepts: 1. awareness and acceptance of differences, 2.Self-awareness, 3. dynamic differences, 4. knowledge of students' cultures, and 5. adapting skills. Training for faculty should take place before the upcoming academic year that allows for preparation to integrate in course curriculum and pedagogy.

1. Require all faculty, and staff to participate in critical-thinking that promotes the concepts of awareness and acceptance of differences.
A culturally competent educator, who is simultaneously self aware of their culture and that of others and will use these differences to advance the service of teaching and learning. Once one understands that there are differences across culture one can then begin to understand that meeting basic educational necessitates different approaches as there are differences in how we learn. Also acknowledging differences allows for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of similarities. When one acknowledges cultural differences it allows for the broadening of perspectives that neither require sympathy or judgment, this then fosters an environment wherein which differences are not just accepted or tolerated, but valued for what their contribution to the Providence College community.

2. Require all faculty and staff to participate in critical-thinking that promotes the concept of Self- Awareness.
Self- awareness implicates the varied ways culture impacts human behavior. In becoming self-aware one is conscious of where their cultural limits are and are likely to be pushed. This leads to predicting potential areas of conflict and then accommodating them when needed.

3. Require all faculty and staff to participate in critical-thinking that promotes the concept of dynamic differences.
Dynamic difference involves understanding that people of different cultures may at some point come into conflict either from misinterpreting or misjudging in cross-cultural communication; then knowing how to right the wrong that has been done. If educators, students, and faculty are prepared for cross-cultural miscommunication, they will be better inclined to respond to such incidents with respect and understanding.

4. Require all faculty and staff to participate in critical-thinking that promotes the concept of becoming knowledgeable of students' Cultures.

Motivating students and promoting academic successes by considering what it might mean in the context of the students cultural group, is a solution that can prevent many cultural incompetent mistakes in the classroom. This allows for teachers to have resources that enables them to refer to cultural norms they may not always need to use or have access to. Knowing your students promotes concern and positive relationships that create a better educational environment. This means not ignoring students' cultural backgrounds such as the concept of being "colorblind" which in fact strips students of their unique cultural background.

5. Require all faculty and staff to participate in critical-thinking of adapting skills.

Adapting and adjusting teaching practices that have their roots in the dominant cultural paradigm to accommodate cultural differences. This allows for educational goals to be better suited for many students and their cultural backgrounds.

<u>Section B:</u> **Providence College Department of Elementary and Special Education Demands**

1.)The department of Elementary and Special Education by next academic year requires all students in the program to take course 211 titled Urban Education. 2.) The department will also integrate a course on establishing culturally responsive teaching practice taught by people of color. 3.) All student teachers placed in Rhode Island Public Schools along with department faculty take a required cross-cultural competence training.

1. The department of Elementary and Special Education by next academic year requires all students in the program to take EDU course 211 titled Urban Education.

The course will broaden student's perspectives on urban education policy, environment, and practice. Students will be exposed to the language, culture, traditions, and an array of multicultural students that they will encounter in urban schools. Students will become familiar with the realities of teaching in urban schools which will better prepare students for future student teaching placements and certified teaching positions.

2. The department of Elementary and Special Education will integrate culturally responsive teaching into all of their courses to promote multicultural teaching practice and theory.

These courses will hone in on culturally responsive pedagogical praxis that include multidimensional culturally congruent instruction. The course will also focus on culturally diverse curriculum content and its effects on students that will benefit the environment. The course will use relevant examples and instruction that is used in

effective ethnic centered classes and schools. These courses will also recognize bias within school structures to expose teachers to the unintentional harm that can be done in the classroom. The Department will be expected to demonstrate that every class they teach has culturally responsive teaching practices as focus for driving all content curricula.

3. All student teachers placed in Rhode Island Public schools take required cross-cultural competence training two weeks.

Students teachers as well as all education faculty will participate in The Northside ISD School District's "Becoming Culturally Competent Educators: Work-in-Progress" training for cross-cultural effectiveness, two weeks after being placed at their student teaching site. The goals of the training are to increase cultural competence. The objectives and activities that go along with this training are also included. They are as followed:

- To be aware of one's own culturally-based assumptions, values, and biases
- To understand the worldview of students who are culturally different From one's self
- To use effective instructional practices, Intervention strategies, and techniques

Objectives and Activities

Objective: Examining Beliefs and Feelings About Different Cultures

Activity 1: Organized in small groups, participants were provided a structured opportunity for cursory examination of their values about others and the impact they wish to make on others.

Activity 2: Participants were asked to reveal more about their beliefs regarding race by individually completing a cultural awareness inventory. This instrument proved a means for safely discussing similar and differing ideas about race and ethnicity among members of a small group.

Objective II: Developing Awareness of How Personal History Affects Cultural Attitudes

Activity 3: Continuing in small groups, participants were asked to use their names as a means of exploring their family's racial or ethnic heritage and family or community experiences tied to their name. Participants began to associate more closely and express personal experiences and issues of race and ethnicity in this activity.

Activity 4: Participants moved away from their small (and relatively safe) group in this activity and formed a new group with others who shared a common racial

or ethnic identity. Groups were asked to discuss the beliefs they held about other racial or ethnic groups, and the beliefs they perceived other groups held about them, including racial slurs, stereotypes, etc. Groups were encouraged to share their findings with the larger groups to identify similarities and difference in experiences among the various racial and ethnic groups represented.

Objective III: Applying Theory to Practice in Defining Culturally Competent Educators

Activity 5: Again in small groups, participants were asked to use art media to brainstorm characteristics that identify a culturally competent educator. Time for sharing among the various small groups was provided.

Activity 6: Through the use of a handout, participants discussed professional competencies and standards that would describe a culturally competent educator.

Objective IV: Generating Specific Plans for Fostering Climates of Mutual Respect in our schools

Activity 7: Remaining in small groups, participants were led through a structured exercise that challenged them to identify and discuss the nature of cultural insensitivity found in their school or district environment. Time was again provided for small groups to share their findings with the larger group.

Activity 8: Remaining in their small groups, participants were asked to identify one culturally related problem in their work environment that was challenging yet within their locus control. Each group was asked to brainstorm possible solutions for resolving that area of cultural concern.

Objective V: Learning Better Prepared to act a Culturally Sensitive Base

Activity 9: Continuing in their small groups, participants were asked to use the power of visualization to synthesize all that they had learned, experienced, and discovered in the course of the day. They were asked to create a logo that represented the culturally friendly climate they would commit to building upon returning to their school or district office. Time for sharing among the groups was again provided as a closure for this activity.

Activity 10: Participants were asked to reconsider the first activity and the values they had espoused regarding others. Given the day's activities, they were provided time to add to their idea and initial thoughts. A call to make one commitment either to improve themselves or to make their environment more culturally sensitive ended the day's experiences.

4. Suspend all Elementary and Special Education Assessments for admission and continuation in the Department.

We are calling for an immediate suspension of the assessments for Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors. It is these assessments that have segregated the ESE department as one of the least diverse departments on campus. These assessments are neither rigorous in scope, relevant to the unique work of teachers, nor act as a tool to improve professional relationships among faculty, staff, and students; and thus, must be removed. Future assessments that impact student standing must be designed by a diverse group of experts outside of this department to insure objectivity, rigor, and relevance to our work as potential teachers.

We ask that:

- All assessments will be designed and graded by a diverse group of experts in teaching pedagogy outside of ESE
- Students who are in need of support will be given the opportunity to choose how and in what ways they will be supported.
- Open registration of mandatory courses will be the norm, not the exception.
- All assessments will be reviewed by the anti-bias protocol of Providence College.

<u>Section C:</u> Revise the Development of Western Civilization curriculum and make it more inclusive, by significantly integrating the contributions of African, Asian, Native American, Latino/Latina civilizations.

Students often critique this core element of the curriculum as unrepresentative of their history or culture. More often than not, these are students of marginalized groups, and it makes it more difficult for them to engage with the subject matter. Given that "Western Civilization" is rooted in the history of these societies, it is particularly important for such an integration.We argue that this approach would be beneficial beyond the Development of Western Civilization curriculum as it would encourage difficult dialogues in classroom discussions. These conversations should not be left solely to the Social Sciences such as Global Studies, Black Studies, Women's Studies, Sociology, etc. Every student is required to take DWC; thus this could serve as a good place to start these difficult dialogues.

<u>Section D:</u> Expansion of Race, Ethnic, Cultural Studies, and Women's Studies

A number of race and/or ethnic and gender programs continue to be under-resourced. Specifically Asian Studies, Black Studies, Latino Studies and Women's Studies. Given the globalization of the curriculum, it is imperative that the College support these programs with faculty and staff. The College should also actively work to ensure that these programs are fully integrated into the larger mission of the College.

Section E: **Cluster Hiring of Black Faculty and Other Faculty of Color.**
Over the next five years, we expect to see specific targets (not rigid quotas) of the hiring of Black faculty and other faculty of color. The college will be expected to report exactly how many people they hire, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Resources must be allocated to support these faculty, once hired, through the tenure and promotion process. To facilitate this, the College must become a member of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity. In addition, the Vice President for Inclusion and Diversity should work in consultation with all departments on how to conduct more diverse and inclusive hiring practices.

Section F: Release of Recent and Historical Campus Climate Surveys.
If we are to truly engage in difficult dialogues than we must be privy to data. This information has been withheld from the college community by the decision not to release that results of the most recent campus climate survey. We are calling for the immediate release of this survey.

Article II: Vice President for Inclusion and Diversity

Section A: Appointment of a Senior Vice President for Inclusion and Diversity.
This position must be filled by a tenured member of the ordinary faculty who will be a full participating member of the President's cabinet and report directly to the President of the College. The Vice President's role is to work with all members of the community to bring to reality the vision of diversity as articulated in the College's mission. Students, faculty and staff representing marginalized groups must play a critical role in the hiring of the Vice President. This individual will serve, among other duties, as the central functionary to access campus climate. For example, more Campus Climate surveys every year to gauge progress of faculty cultural competence. The Vice President for Inclusion and Diversity will engage in a comprehensive review of all Departments and Programs to formulate a plan for cluster hiring and subsequent searches.

Section B: Rigorous Sensitivity Training for all Students at Providence College.
Students' sensitivity training will take place during New Student Orientation, and be integrated throughout their matriculation, that will emphasize the following concepts:

1. What It Means To Be Culturally Competent
2. Understanding Racism and Prejudice
3. Recognizing Unconscious Bias, Unintentional Racism and Microaggressions
4. Understanding Privilege and Racial Consciousness Among Whites

Article III: Title VI Coordinator

Section A: An Expansion of the Bias Response Team Protocol

The College needs to centralize bias reporting and the response to racialized hate crimes in addition to other bias assaults.. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Center for Education list hate crimes, predicated on race, to be among the top hate crimes committed on college campuses. Thus the need for a centralized reporting system. When bias incidents occur, and the Providence College Administration is aware, there should be a written and specific detailed alert sent to the entire community within 24 hours. All students on this campus should feel safe, therefore, all bias incidents occurring on campus and surrounding areas should be addressed urgently. When an incident is investigated and a decision is reached, the campus community should also be alerted of such.

Section B: Random Security Office Screening

Beyond the current ongoing external review of the Security office, we ask for continuous random undercover monitoring of Security office practices to screen for racial/ethnic profiling. We expect full and complete annual and public reporting of the findings of such audits.

Article IV: Establishment of a Center for the Study of the Black Diaspora.

This Center would be connected to a living-learning environment and would offer programs and services for all members of the College's community. It should house a counselor specifically trained to work with marginalized members of our campus and would serve as a site for research and exploration of racism that extend into and beyond the classroom. We ask that as part of the establishment of this Center that Black Studies, over the next five years, be made a Department and that it offer both a major and minor.

Article V: Establishment of a new Multicultural Center in Moore Hall.

Creating a Multicultural Center at Providence College, where all work collaboratively to strengthen and sustain an inclusive community for students, particularly students of color and other historically underserved students. Students will be required to have input in the design and staffing of this center.

Such a Center would offer:

1. Study space
2. Space for a Counselor/Advisor to assist students in need
3. Space for events
4. Office space for:
    a. Vice President for Inclusion and Diversity
    b. Director of Cultural Education and Programming

Article VI: Critical and Conscious Diversification of the Division of Student Affairs Staff.

Over the next five years we ask that all spaces in the Division of Student Affairs be diversified in a manner that extends beyond symbolic representation. Students will be required to have input in staffing and possible restructuring of the Division of Student Affairs.

Article VII: Regarding new Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Committee

We ask for the establishment of a permanent Committee whose charge is to implement and evaluate the Diversity and Inclusion plan as stated above. The Providence College President is expected to chair this Committee. Members of the Committee should include: a member of the Board of Trustees, student representatives from each of the college's chapters of the NAACP, SOAR, Women Empowered, and the Brotherhood, faculty representatives from the Coalition Against Racism, The Vice President for Inclusion and and Diversity, at least one alumni of color, at least one community member (from Providence or the surrounding area), and additional administration representatives as needed. The Committee will meet at least monthly to review the goals of the plan, assess progress toward those goals, and decide on action steps to ensure that the goals of the plan are met. Additionally, the varied "Diversity Committees" that currently exist will report directly to this larger oversight Committee on Inclusion and Diversity. The Committee, should also be afforded with the rights and resources to address diversity and inclusion issues as they arise at the college.