

The Collective Response to Racial Insensitivity

The Western Carolina Administration, Western Carolina Board of Trustees, Western Carolina Faculty and Staff, Western Carolina Student Government Association, and other governing bodies:

Western Carolina University is a place that promotes diversity on every avenue. While on the outside it's presented as a wonderful, thriving place for all, in actuality, it tends to be a place of fear and confusion for students of color. For many years, the current students and the ones before us have expressed our concerns and frustration and for years, they have been ignored. We will not stand for the mistreatment of another person of color or any minority on this campus. Not by our peers, not by faculty and staff, and not by administration.

Western Carolina University exploits the livelihood of minorities on this campus. We're used to promote the "diversity" and "inclusion". Brochures and posters give off a false narrative that black students have the same experience as our white peers on this campus. We do not. Black students are called "Nigger" and it is ignored as if it were our rightful name. For anyone to call someone such a thing shows complete disregard and disrespect. There is no other insult that can measure up to the inhumanity and disdain of one calling another a "Nigger". "Our" peers and "our" upper administration must fully understand this. The administration has allowed this heinous behavior to continue for too long.

We, the black students of WCU, come to you because we are simply tired. We are tired of finding solutions because we are failed by those that are supposed to advocate for us. No longer will our concerns be brushed off or our experiences be isolated. No longer will we allow minorities to come to this campus and be blindsided by the situations of racial insensitivities that Western Carolina University allows to continue.

This document will live on and serve as a reference for future minority students if they should experience the failure of the administration.

To create a better environment for students to come, we firmly expect the following:

From the Student Government Association

1. We expect for a mandatory course in cultural awareness to be created. This course will be added into the freshman requirements along with the course of sexual assault and alcohol education. Alcohol and sexual assault are courses that are required to be completed at the beginning of Freshman year. If the two courses aren't completed then students courses will be dropped. Cultural awareness is as equally important as the other two topics. The course should be just as long as the first two courses. We expect that the course cover racism, bigotry, and sexism and any other issues that people of color and members of the LGBTQ+ may experience. This course development must be reaching its completion by **March 16th, 2018**.
2. We expect a mandatory 3 part series to be implemented into the mandatory first year seminar. The series will fall in line with topics such as time management and study habits. This 3 part series will be designed by the Chief Diversity Officer, a newly created student group, and Upper administration with possible feedback from students regarding racial bias, sexual orientation, bigotry, sexism etc... Course development takes time so we expect this to be part of the Fall 2019 curriculum. Course curriculum will be created and finalized by **Fall 2018**, faculty will be trained by **Spring 2019**.
3. We expect that there be an Ethics Agreement created and required for students to sign when entering Western Carolina University. When a student acts or behaves in an unethical manner, this document should serve as a reminder and binding contract that the student agreed to. This will be reviewed and be a guide to determine what the student violated and what disciplinary actions should be taken. This document must be completed and implemented by **Fall 2018**. This form can be housed in residential living or with the Chief Diversity Officer. We expect this document to be discussed during summer orientation during the Vice Chancellor's message.
4. We expect that there be specific lines in the SGA budget for "MLK Week" and for "Diversity". We expect for the lines to be added under those exact names and the funds be used to drive the campus towards the unity that the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood for and the diversity that WCU claims to stand for. We recommended a yearly meeting with the Nu Zeta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and the Department of Intercultural Affairs be held to better use the line items. This should be adopted by **Fall 2018**.
5. We expect that all SGA Senators and Executive members complete Safe Zone training, attend at least 1 C.A.S.E session, and receive a workshop by the Chief Diversity Officer

on topics related to making this campus a more inclusive environment for all students. We expect these requirements to be adopted by **Fall 2018**.

6. We expect the SGA President to be required to have two meetings per semester with the presidents of the underrepresented on groups on campus. To assess if the the climate on campus and to reach out to the underrepresented populations. We expect these requirements to be put into action **by March 16th, 2018**.
7. We expect for a position to be added to the SGA Executive Board that will focus on the the need and concerns of underrepresented student groups on campus. This position needs to be involved with the Intercultural Affairs Office council as a way to bridge the gap between the minority student groups and the SGA. We expect these requirements to be adopted by **Fall Semester 2018**.

From Dean of Students, Kevin Koett

1. We expect a public, videoed apology from Kevin Koett. This apology will take place on **February 20th, 2018** at noon at the clocktower. In the meeting that took place on Tuesday, January 23rd, at 7pm in the Intercultural affairs, Kevin Koett was the only one

who did not apologize for the behavior of his students, for the lack of action, and for the ongoing racist problems. This apology shall not be vague in any sense. On Kevin Koett's Dean of Student page on the Western Carolina University website, it states, "The Dean of Student's office serves as a resource for all students with the goal of cultivating a supportive campus community for everyone...The ultimate goal of the Dean of Students is to promote and enhance a supportive campus community that is based upon community principles and values student advocacy...The WCU campus community creates transformational learning experiences, educates students on the value of living in a diverse, dynamic global community and encourages the personal and professional development of each student. We're dedicated to maintaining an inclusive, safe, student-focused environment. Students receive proactive education on developing positive, healthy relationships and appropriate communication and conflict management skills as well as making informed decisions pertaining to alcohol and drug use." It is clear that certain parts of these statements have not been met. We do not feel safe, supported, or included. Dean Koett can clearly see from the listed paragraph and our concerns that action needs to be taken.

2. We expect for Dean Koett to stop acting as the face of the Intercultural Affairs Department. As students that are frequently in and out of the space, we do not see Kevin Koett often in any sense. It is offensive for credit to be taken from hard working faculty and staff by someone with little involvement. 'The Intercultural Affairs is not a trophy case, it is our safe space. This should take effect **immediately**.
3. We expect that the Dean of Students conduct a questionnaire that is sent to the entire student body in order to gauge performance, engagement, and progress here at Western Carolina. This questionnaire should provide the Dean with insight that will act as constructive criticism to improve performance. This questionnaire should be conducted each **Fall and Spring Semester**.

From the Upper Administration

1. First and foremost, We expect a statement condemning bigotry on campus and from our students, faculty, and administration. Western Carolina University has a past of isolating events and hiding them from the public and it must stop now. It is saddening and quite discouraging to know that Western has not put out such a statement before. The content of this statement should include, "Western Carolina University is not a place for one who fosters hate for others, doesn't live in an ethical manner and isn't open to diversity. It should also be noted that this statement is in result to past events and published because of problems minority student face here on campus." This should be posted to the Western Carolina University website, sent to students, and posted to any social media accounts that Western holds by **March 16th, 2018**.
2. We expect for appropriate changes to be made to the community creed. It is clear that the creed is out of date and revisions need to be made. The community creed should be more inclusive and cover make it clear that bigotry isn't accepted here. The community creed should be changed by **Fall 2018**.
3. We expect for there to be a minor and concentration offered in African-American Studies. Strides towards diversity need to include education. There is a certain feeling of exclusion that comes along with not being able to minor in African-American Studies. If it were offered, more people could be educated on us as a whole and it would hopefully lead to more open minded individuals. We expect for the plan and proposal to be finished by **the end of the spring 2018 semester, a final version by end of fall semester 2018, faculty trained by spring 2019** and we expect for this minor and concentration to be added to the curriculum, offered, and advertised by **Fall Semester 2019**.
4. We expect for at least one or two gender neutral bathroom to be created in each building, to foster a more inclusive environment and community. This should be implemented by **May 4th, 2018**.
5. We expect for there to be a Bias Reporting Committee created to better address the issues going on at Western Carolina University. It is clear that having the Bias Reports

only going straight to the Dean of Students is ineffective. We expect for this Committee to be created by the **End of Spring Semester 2018**.

6. We expect for the student that yelled out “Nigger” at the President of the Black Student Union and members of the Inspirational Gospel Choir on February 17th, 2018 from the 9th Floor Kitchen at Harrill Hall to be disciplined for the carelessness of his actions and the disregard for the animosity that the black students are experiencing on this campus. His actions were careless, insensitive, and disgusting and there should be no reason that his actions are allowed or tolerated. We expect for discipline to take place by **March 16th, 2018**.

From the Greek Engagement Office

1. We expect for someone who is a part of NPHC to be hired to direct NPHC. The current Director of Greek Life holds a complete disregard for NPHC and disrespects our legacy. We are tired of those trying to direct us that don’t hold the same sort of values and purpose that we do. It is unacceptable for someone that is not a part of NPHC to advise us. We expect a position (open to a graduate student, coordinator, a part time position) to be created for a member of NPHC to reside over NPHC by the **Fall Semester of 2019**.
2. We expect for the Divine 9 to receive visual representation on campus. CPC and IFC have houses in the village and paw prints on the road that show their recognition on this campus but, of course, NPHC does not. Some of the organizations that are apart of NPHC have began serving this community for over 40 years ago and out of respect for their service and contributions, they deserve recognition. We expect for the initial plaques that were taken down years ago to be placed again in a visible place. We are also want to be approved for a plot for the NPHC council. This allows a place to congregate on campus and put on programs for the effort to become a crucial part in the community. We expect to have an update by **March 16th, 2018**.

We are not asking for these things to be done. We hope there is an understanding that what we ask for is long overdue.

“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.”

-Angela Davis