

Demands Response: December 6, 2021 (Initial Response Report)

Responses can be found below to the demands submitted to University administration in October 2020 by the undersigned WIU student groups. The demand responses are in progress and/or are part of an ongoing process. The reality exists that our student, faculty, and staff continue to face anti-Black sentiments, racism, harassment, and much more, and more must be done to combat this, including reviewing best practices at peer institutions that have made progress toward a more just and inclusive campus.

To Western Illinois University,

We, as Black students who attend Western Illinois University, are demanding that Western Illinois University show that #BlackLivesMatter and do not just say. We are in a multi pandemic era, where black people are at the mercy of diseases, COVID19 and anti-blackness. There is only, truly, a concern for one. On campus, we have witnessed too much racism, micro-aggressions from professors, our RA's and people who are supposed to protect and be there for us. We are tired. For too long, we have experienced too much with little to no support and **demand the following to be made immediately.**

For Fall 2021, the 1262 Black students at Western comprise 17.3% of the overall student population. There are currently 321 Black students in the first-year class which constitutes 35.2% of the first-year student body.

We demand that Western Illinois University rebuild the African American Studies department by allowing students to major in African American studies, providing more funding for the program and regenerating all that was decreased, stripped, in 2018.

A committee was established in 2020 to begin the process of re-establishing major programs and/or adding new major degree programs in African American Studies, Latinx Studies, Queer Studies, Women's Studies and other under-represented groups. A study, which was completed in Summer 2021, is being finalized, with final recommendations expected early Spring 2022. Final approval is possible by the end of the 2021-2022 Academic Year. Once approval has been granted by all governing the process of hiring faculty and staff for the new academic programs department can begin.

We demand that Western Illinois University includes Black students who attend Western Illinois University in the hiring process of professors for the African American Studies department.

Students are invited to serve on select University search committees, along with faculty and staff representatives from departments and divisions. Ensuring Black student representation on search committees for African American Studies will be part of the search committee selection process.

We demand that Western Illinois University require that two of the courses offered through the AAS department is a required course for all students; the two courses are Intro to African American Studies and African American Literature.

Upon receiving approval to establish an African American Studies degree program, further discussion regarding additional/required General Education coursework will be further initiated with the Faculty Senate, which oversees curriculum modifications/additions. The current Multicultural General Education requirement includes one course in Multiculturalism.

We demand that a policy in the code of conduct is created to end hate speech, which should be defined in Western Illinois University Student Code of Conduct as “public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation” and the repercussion for a student violating this policy include suspension and expulsion.

Members of the University community should live and work in an environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, and intimidation. University officials enforce the conduct code and policies to ensure a harassment-free environment.

The University's Policy on Nondiscrimination states that “Western Illinois University strives to provide an educational and working environment that is free from discrimination and harassment for faculty, staff, and students. WIU policy prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of sex, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, genetic information, veteran status, and any other classes protected by state or federal law. This policy covers nondiscrimination in both employment and access to educational opportunities.”

While the University must follow the First Amendment and legal rulings regarding speech, the Code of Conduct does specify several violations of the code related to harassment and violence including:

* Engaging in harmful or potentially harmful behaviors, including, but not limited to, the following: committing actions which cause physical, mental, or emotional harm; bully; intimidate; harass; threaten; coerce; or otherwise endanger the health or safety of oneself or others;

* Committing acts of gender harassment defined as subjecting a person to adverse treatment based on held gender stereotypes. Adverse treatment can include verbal, nonverbal, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on gender or held gender stereotypes, but is not limited to conduct of a sexual nature.

* Any violation of law, Student Code of Conduct, or policy based on the actual or perceived identity of an individual or group of individuals. Such identities include, but are not limited to, age, ancestry, color, disability, gender expression, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Suspension and expulsion are included as potential repercussions for violating the Code.

We demand that Western Illinois University only support businesses in Macomb that support black people and #blacklivesmatter.

Macomb city officials have been made aware of the various issues, concerns, and complaints. University officials continue to work with community leaders to further foster a more supportive town-gown partnership that provides a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for WIU students, faculty, and staff.

A method/manner to identify/verify businesses that "support Black people and Black Lives Matter" does not legally exist, and to create an "approved business list" could subject the University to legal action.

As an alternative approach, the WIU Purchasing Office has been diligently working with campus constituents to increase the institution's expenditures with minority-owned businesses and those that support minority-owned businesses. Additionally, Beginning January 1, 2022, for large purchases made by the University, diversity and inclusion must be considered when the procurement is made by a request for proposal (RFP).

We demand that Western Illinois University hire more professors, staff, student affairs professionals that are Black or African American; and increase the ethnic diversity and racial makeup of the University by 100%.

To reach a diverse applicant pool, WIU utilizes numerous diverse employment sites, both state-sponsored and specific employment sites and diverse outlets, to advertise vacant positions. We continue to review how we can promote our available positions to reach as diverse a pool of applicants as possible.

In addition, WIU has increased the University's use of the State Universities Civil Service System Intern Program, which is designed to increase the applicant pool. The program is designed to produce a representative cross-section of candidates from all ethnic, racial, cultural, and gender backgrounds for vacant civil service positions.

WIU's Director of Human Resources is a member of a state universities' Diversity Affinity group to improve recruitment, retention, and engagement of diverse candidates. The group regularly meets and shares resources, and will be issuing in the near future a best practices document to aid institutions' efforts to hire more diverse faculty and staff. WIU will align its hiring practices with these best practice recommendations.

WIU has seen a slight increase in the hire of racially diverse faculty and staff in Fiscal Year 2021, including three Black administrators, four Black faculty, and two Black staff members, among others identifying with a particular underrepresented group. The University continues to work to recruit and retain diverse faculty and staff.

The re-established CT Vivian Diversity Teaching Scholars Program ensures we promote black and other minority faculty hires across our campus. Our inaugural class of 2021 included two Black, one Hispanic and one Asian faculty scholars. The 2022 class search presently is underway, with the intent of hiring five more faculty scholars for the 2022-2023 Academic Year with more emphasis on hiring BIPOC faculty.

We demand that Western Illinois University 's University Union Board intentionally create more programming geared towards the black college students.

The Office of Student Engagement and other student-centered organizations are working to address more inclusive programming specifically designed for Black students, and other diverse student populations, at WIU.

To further address this demand, the University Union Board recently met with the Black Student Association to hear the concerns directly from the BSA members and to begin an ongoing process of diversifying and making student programming more inclusive.

We demand that Western Illinois University's Office of Public Safety hire more Black officers.

As police officer positions at public institutions are classified as civil service positions, applicants who meet the required criteria, as set by the State of Illinois Civil Service System, are required to take a civil service exam in order to interview. Within the confines of the restrictive state civil service system, the Office of Public Safety has been working to recruit Black and other diverse officers to apply and test for WIU police officer positions, including a process for lateral transfer opportunities for officers from other police departments throughout the state.

The Office of Public Safety currently employees three black staff members, and has been actively working to recruit Black and other diverse officers to apply and test for WIU police officer positions, including a process for lateral transfer opportunities for officers from other police departments throughout the state.

OPS will be testing again in Spring 2022 and is working to raise awareness of the process and to recruit a diverse group of applicants.

We demand that Western Illinois University's University Housing and Dining Services diversity training is prioritized and expansive to include the history of the current campus climate at Western Illinois University.

University Housing hosts in-service programs each month for resident life staff that address various topics related to diversity. University Housing also hosted training sessions during its Spring 2021 and Fall 2021 residence life training, which featured activities and speakers related to diversity and inclusion and focused on promoting dialogue regarding diversity and issues of difference. This will continue as a key component of future trainings.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will be incorporated in programs and trainings across campus.

We demand that Western Illinois University mandates that professors complete diversity training that also includes history of the current campus climate at Western Illinois University.

Dr. Sterling Saddler, the assistant to the president for Diversity and Inclusion, has identified training modules that will be provided to all members of the University community on an annual basis. These modules will address issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as well as Micro-aggressions. Anticipated roll-out for the modules will be in February.

We demand that Western Illinois University fully accept accountability and take the time to address the incessant anti-blackness that has plagued the black community since 2018 and previously; moreover, aims to create a more inclusive environment for the black community through a student-centered approach.

While WIU has strived, and continues to strive, to ensure an inclusive, welcoming, and diverse environment, the reality exists that our student, faculty, and staff continue to face anti-Black sentiments, racism, harassment, and much more. At WIU, we support our students and work to ensure fair and equitable treatment, in a safe, inclusive, and diverse environment, both on and off campus. The University recognizes the issues and concerns that our Black students, faculty, and staff face, and supports efforts, programs and resources to bring these issues forward, including the Black Student Association's Black Lives Matter protest in response to institutional and community racism, and to eliminate discrimination, racism, unequitable treatment, and anti-Black actions.

WIU has hired an Assistant to the President for Diversity and Inclusion, developed University statements, implemented policy changes, established additional trainings, and continues to review additional academic courses/majors, and increase efforts to expand representation on campus. WIU incorporates diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the university, departments, colleges, and divisions, and the Multicultural Center continues to provide and coordinate student-centered intentional programming, advising, guidance, advocacy, representation staff, a physical space, student forums, and more. The Multicultural Center is committed to addressing anti-Blackness on campus. The center's and its staff's dedication to Black students is paramount to the center's mission to ensure a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus.

The University will continue to educate, promote, and support all members of the WIU community to respect, appreciate, and support the Black community and all other members of underrepresented groups. President Huang has presented a formal request that the state allocate one million dollars to WIU to assist us in our efforts to address issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion on our campus.

Signed,

Black Student Association

Black Student Summit N.A.A.C.P.

National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Incorporated

Preeminent Gentleman's Society

Preeminent Ladies Society

African Student Association

Black Male Achievement Network

Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center

Eta Eta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated

Zeta Iota Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated

Epsilon Beta Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated

House Arrest 2

Elite Beauty

DollHouse Dance

Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center Dance Troupe

G.L.A.M. Modeling

PPMT

National Association of Black Accountants

National Association of Black Journalists

Beyond Beautiful