

Demands Response Report Update: Feb. 22, 2022

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. This response report will be updated, as additional information/action is provided/taken.

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 RAs 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.

1. 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 the major program in African American Studies, as well as majors and/or major options in Latinx Studies, Queer Studies, Women's Studies and other under-represented groups.

A study, which began in Summer 2021, is being finalized, with recommendations expected in Spring 2022. Final approval may still be possible by the end of the 2021-2022 academic year. Once approval has been granted by all WIU shared governance bodies, the process of hiring faculty and staff for the new academic programs department can begin.

2. 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 across the University. Ensuring Black student representation on search committees for African American Studies will be part of the search committee selection process. Additionally, Black student representation has been included on all the Rev. Dr. C.T. Vivian Diversity Teaching Scholars search committees.

3. 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.

Following the approval to establish/reestablish the African American Studies degree program, further discussion will be initiated regarding the requirement of these two courses. To make these courses a requirement for all WIU students, approval is first needed from the Council on Curricular Programs and Instruction (CCPI), followed by the Faculty Senate, and lastly, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

4. 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.

WIU Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy (formerly known as the WIU Nondiscrimination Policy) states that "Hate speech is defined as: public speech, written language, or graphic material that encourages or incites violence or physical threats of harm against someone based on their status in a protected class such as race, religion, disability, veteran status, age, or gender."

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 states, "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.

5. 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.

WIU has created the President's Council on Community Engagement to create positive and productive discourse focused on improving University-community relationships, with an emphasis on social justice and equity, and to discuss the issues and concerns facing our minority populations and the environment in which they live, work, and learn.

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).

From the Macomb Area Chamber of Commerce: The Macomb Area Chamber of Commerce is committed to fostering an environment of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and will not stand for discrimination of any kind. Chamber member businesses and organizations are expected to do the same. The Chamber regularly sends information to educate business owners and leaders on DEI initiatives, including anti-racist reading lists, invitations to participate in One Human Family and Shared Community Action Group workshops and events, and other opportunities (both on and off campus). Chamber leadership also works closely with community and University leaders to address the needs of Macomb-area residents, which includes WIU students. The Chamber is developing a DEI plan to implement into operating procedures and programming, and will continue to provide educational resources to its members so they may expand their knowledge on DEI to ensure Macomb grows into a more inclusive and welcoming community.

From Macomb Area Economic Development Corp: MAEDCO supports an inclusive, welcoming environment in Macomb for all current and future businesses, and will provide support for all businesses in the region.

6. 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%.

The state universities' Diversity Affinity group to improve recruitment, retention, and engagement of diverse candidates has finalized best practices to assist institutions' efforts to hire more diverse faculty and staff. WIU is aligning its hiring practices with these best practice recommendations.

The University has also continued to increase the use of employment advertising outlets specific to reaching diverse populations for vacant positions.

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 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. The 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.

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

The University Union Board (UUB) president met with the BSA president in Fall 2021 semester to discuss Spring '22 programs, and plans were made to continue to meet on a periodic basis. The UUB/Office of Student Engagement will schedule a meeting with all MCC student organizations to further discuss programming.

Comedian Kiry Shabazz to WIU, sponsored by UUB and IHC, will be on campus in March (rescheduled from opening weekend). Programming/entertainment/educationals scheduled, such as the movie, 'Sorry to Bother You' during Black History Month; updated music playlists for events; prizes to ensure inclusivity, to name a few.

The Office of Student Engagement has:

Volunteer Programs/OSE partnered with the GBCC/MCC for activities during MLK Week, including a service event with Habitat for Humanity.

Student Government Association created a new cabinet position: Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

OSE is evaluating all areas to ensure DEI is a common practice in programming, and the Homecoming Committee is assessing and evaluating ways to be more inclusive.

Fraternity and Sorority Life approved the return of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc in Fall 2021, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc has been approved to return to campus. Both organizations are Historically Black and part of the Divine Nine. Additionally, in the 2022-2023 academic year, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc, another Historically Black Fraternity, along with Sigma Iota Alpha Sorority, (Latinx) has been approved to start on campus.

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

WIU's Human Resources is continuing to accept applications for Lateral Transfer positions through February 2022. One or two positions will be filled from this list,

In Spring 2022, OPS is partnering with the Multicultural Center (and possibly the Minorities in Blue) to host an overview of how the police hiring process works, resume building, and police hiring interview

suggestions. OPS will also plan a traditional hire for an academy date beginning September 2022, and will continue to participate in WIU LEJA and other career fairs to ensure a diverse applicant pool.

9. 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 continues to host in-service programs each month for resident life staff that address various topics related to diversity. University Housing also hosts training sessions during its residence life training, which features activities and speakers related to DEI, and focuses on promoting dialogue regarding diversity and issues of difference. This will continue as a key component of future trainings.

10. 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.

DEI is being incorporated in programs and trainings across campus. Diversity training focusing on microaggressions was implemented this spring, in which all members of the University community were required to participate. Additional training is in the process of being implemented specifically for faculty and staff.

11. 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.

President Huang has established an Anti-Racism Task Force, composed of approximately 22 faculty, staff, students (including BSA leaders), and community leaders. The task force will begin meeting in late February/early March, and its objectives will be to identify anti-racism initiatives and advise/support the creation of the University's Diversity Plan.

In addition, the University is establishing an Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, in late Summer 2022 or early Fall 2022, following Board of Trustees approval. A director will be hired to oversee the office and further DEI-related initiatives.

Administrators continue to meet with the Black Student Association to address their concerns, and to ensure transparency in actions, demand responses, and communication.

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, inequitable treatment, and anti-Black actions.

Over the past two years, WIU hired an Assistant to the President for Diversity and Inclusion, developed a Universitywide Diversity Statement, 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