

## Introduction

Let us remind you that this is a land grant institution and that as such, its mission is to “promote access to higher education and collaborating to advance knowledge benefiting communities, the state, and world” (<http://landgrant150.umn.edu>).

To this University being diverse is not about being a person of color, a GLBTQ person, a differently-abled person, a working-class person. To this University, being diverse is about having the appropriated language to define yourself as diverse even when you don't belong to any of the previously mentioned communities; this runs dangerously close to the language of forced assimilation, color-blind racism, and cultural appropriation. In doing so, the essence of our experiences and intellectual productions are consistently devalued and/or erased.

We are continuing a conversation that began in 1492, and that was highly visible during the 1969 Morrill Hall Student Takeover. This conversation was most recently revitalized by the Whose University? Campaign in 2010-2011. In continuing the questions that were asked at that point, and still in conversation with the leaders of that campaign, we emphasize the need for permanent change and sustained commitment to structural equity within the University.

## Demands

With this in mind...

### I. We expect that the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students from historically marginalized communities become a priority.

- We demand the university immediately remove language from its admissions application that questions prospective students about their prior convictions and criminal offences, as well as their history of expulsion, suspension, and/or probation in their former institutions (UMN Freshman Application for Admissions, 2014). We believe this is an issue of equity and justice, as people of color are disproportionately targeted for expulsion and suspension in the education system and disproportionately profiled, convicted, and incarcerated in the criminal legal system. If these questions must be asked, then they can be asked after students have been considered for admission.
  - This would be in line with the “Ban the Box” law that Governor Dayton passed in 2014, which removed questions regarding applicant’s criminal background from initial job applications.
- We demand improved active recruitment of students at the community college level, and a commitment to support these students with adequate resources, financial and otherwise. This includes orientation activities that parallel those of incoming freshmen, a mandatory tour of the second floor in Coffman Memorial Union and of Appleby Hall, including all of the resources readily available for students.
- In solidarity with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), We demand that the administration prioritize recruiting students of color until the university accurately reflects the demographics of the Twin Cities. The U of M should meet benchmarks of having a student body that is proportional to one-half the city demographics of non-white groups in one year and three-fourths the city demographics of non-white groups in two years. (as an example: 9% black student body in one year and 13.5% in two years compared to the city demographics of 18% of residents). It is critical that the UMN make a fundamental and permanent commitment towards campus diversification.

- In solidarity with SDS, We demand the administration begin lowering tuition to increase accessibility for working class Minnesotans. Rising education costs create an economic squeeze that both pushes existing students into debt and prevents poorer Minnesotans from ever attending. This prevents diversity of class and race, as non-white racial groups continue to be systemically impoverished and excluded from economic mobility.
- We demand the university have available affordable housing on central campus for those of *lower socioeconomic status at a rate that students can afford* to be a central part of university life, and not just on the periphery.
  - This is in response to the increased construction of the “luxury apartments” along Washington Avenue and in Dinkytown.

II . We expect an emphasis be placed on the well-being of people from historically marginalized communities.

- We demand an equal opportunity to succeed without enduring the mental anxiety of not being able to focus on and afford the university’s academic life. Therefore, we demand the university provide emergency scholarships for students from historically marginalized communities in need of financial support.
- We demand the mismatch in biographies and consciousness between students of color and the medical providers that treat them, especially those in counseling and mental health services, be immediately addressed and corrected.
  - This includes having more medical providers of historically marginalized identities who have a social justice-oriented ideologies.
- We demand a “Reporting Discrimination, Harassment & Retaliation” statement be attached to every syllabi. This statement must clearly detail a necessary commitment by faculty to the creation of safe spaces for historically marginalized communities within the classroom and clear options for students to file formal grievances against students and faculty who commit acts deemed racist, homophobic, sexist, transphobic, xenophobic, etc.
- We demand effective means be provided to address grievances with regard to discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. There needs to be transparency within the Office for Equity and Diversity about what the process entails, who receives complaints, and what the consequences are for perpetrators and repeat offenders.
- We demand the university give marginalized students, staff, and faculty equal opportunity to implement change without threat of suspension, dismissal, and/or attacking our right to organize. This includes providing adequate funding and support to the organizing avenues historically used by marginalized communities within the campus e.g. the student cultural centers, ethnic/cultural faculty associations, student organizations, ethnic studies departments, and union representation and engagement.
- We demand the permanency of the student cultural centers (SCCs) be ensured by the university, by providing adequate funding and paid staff, and an end to all required “reviews” and evaluations of these spaces that threaten their permanency. The SCCs are critical in order to fulfill the university’s commitment to providing education for a diverse community, and often carry the burden of ensuring the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of people from historically marginalized communities.

- We demand access to at least one gender-neutral restroom in every building on campus.
- We demand that all University buildings be compliant with the American With Disabilities Act (ADA). The current signage on the second floor of Coffman is not compliant with the ADA.

### III. We expect an emphasis be placed on a comprehensive educational experience for all students.

- We demand a restructuring of the curriculum across the university to include the histories of marginalized people, an acknowledgement of histories of struggle and resistance, and an acknowledgement that the university exists as a product of colonial processes.
- Restructuring of classrooms must also entail an appreciation of the relationship between biography and scholarship. Classrooms can no longer be race, class, gender, sexuality, or (dis)ability-“neutral” spaces - they must be actively supportive and nurturing to people with these identities. In the words of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, “Washing one’s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.”
- We demand the university require all students take at least one ethnic studies course.
- We demand the university expand all ethnic studies departments to include 8 full time faculty, at least 2 of which must be senior faculty, that this process be initiated within the next year, and that they be paid competitive salaries.
- We demand the university have at least 2 faculty of color engaging in critical race and ethnic studies scholarship with a social justice emphasis in every department, and that they be paid competitive salaries.
- We demand that the university give students of historically marginalized backgrounds an opportunity to play a role in the hiring processes of faculty of color.
- We demand for increased exposure to histories of resistance initiated by marginalized communities through the creation of an archive of historical documents and photographs, and that this archive be readily available to the public. Additionally, we demand a display that features these histories be created and located in a centrally located space, such as the second floor of Coffman Memorial Union. There should be transparency about the university and its past dealings with race relations.

### IV. We expect the acknowledgment and respect of surrounding communities.

- We demand that the University of Minnesota Police Department eliminate racialized crime alerts.
- We demand a halt to all projects initiated by the university and a withdrawal of public support for “development” projects that gentrify and displace local communities, such as the luxury apartment developments in the vicinity of the university. Instead, the university should concern itself with nourishing and restoring relationships with local

communities and community intellectuals.

- Opportunities for bi-directional engagement and education should be welcomed and promoted by the university. The university needs to recognize the wealth of knowledge and culture that exists outside of the walls of this university, and not just see these spaces as spaces for expansion. Moreover, further securitizing campus and displacing local communities will only make these goals more difficult to achieve.

V. We expect engagement with substantive, instead of cosmetic, diversity.

- We demand the university fundamentally reorganize its goals and priorities to include access and justice for local communities within the Twin Cities.
  - As a public land grant university, access and justice for working class communities in the Twin Cities should be the priority.
  - This means reconsidering who benefits from the “transformation” of the UMN into “world-class” public research university?
- We demand the university redefine its commitment to “diversity” in a manner that always includes historically marginalized communities; that it be transparent and state who it means by “diversity” in all of its communications concerning this issue, and that it honor the commitments it has made to these communities. That is, if it states that the following communities *embody* diversity...
  - “People of color, including underrepresented groups and new immigrant populations
  - People with both visible and invisible disabilities
  - People who identify as women
  - People of various gender and sexual identities and expressions
  - First-generation students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds” (<https://diversity.umn.edu/aboutoed>)...then it must serve and support them in action and not just word.

***“Most histories continue to teach us not to understand and not to hope. But the struggle for transformation also continues, stubbornly insisting on other stories, other visions. . . The hope persists of grasping lessons from the past to help shape the future” –Elizabeth Martínez***