



Queens College BLFSA Against Anti-Blackness and for Systemic Change

In the spirit of Queens College's motto, "Discimus ut Serviamus," the Black & Latinx Faculty & Staff Association (BLFSA) of Queens College release this statement.

We stand with CUNY and the global community in outrage at the continuous acts of racial injustice against Black and Brown people in our country and the diaspora. Most notably, in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the disparities of healthcare homelessness for Black and Brown communities, the responses to the recent horrific deaths of Mr. Ahmaud Arbery, Ms. Breonna Taylor and Mr. George Floyd highlight the systematic oppression Black people have had to endure for hundreds of years up to our present time.

Racism on our campus has played out in recruitment, retention, academic and financial resources, scholarship and mentoring support for Black and Latinx faculty and beyond. One of the many attempts that have been promoted widely is the "Complicated Conversations" series that began in 2013 in order to provide lessons of empirical learning and engagement. However, the current injustices were loudly responded to with silence at Queens College.

Many of our BLFSA members have experienced reprehensible acts of racism as a direct result of anti-blackness. This is wrong and we refuse to be silent while our fellow Black and Latinx faculty, staff and students remain the target of racial injustice. While looking forward, we are accepting the challenge of the incoming President Frank Wu, "No one will be allowed to violate the safety of our students, faculty, and staff. Crimes and wrongdoing motivated by race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, sexual identity, perceived ability, religious faith, or similar factors are attacks on individuals and those whom they represent. This conduct, which reaches the level of violence, inflicts trauma directly and indirectly." In this same breath, we would also like to challenge the use and understanding in the importance of differentiating diversity, equity and inclusion when referencing the experiences of our ethnic population. As a collective, we have experienced the consequences of anti-blackness and demand more commitment from Queens College in accelerating our existing academic environment.

If in fact, Queens College is ready and prepared to increase diversity and inclusion efforts, what will a Black Lives Matter campus entail for everyone? If Queens College is truly dedicated to

making the changes and committed to anti-blackness, the acknowledgment must begin with reflections beyond theoretical language and begin accountability with the demands the appropriate action:

Administration:

-Revisit the strategic plan commitment to racial and social justice with language that is representative of the Queens College-wide community. Ensuring racial representation is continuous and that the efforts mirror the current and prospective student population:

Students Fall 2019: Black 10.3%; Latinx 22.4%; Asian 33.9%; White 33.1%

Faculty Fall 2018-19: Black 6.5%; Latinx 7.5%; Asian,13.6%; White 63.25%

Staff Fall 2018-19: Black 19.1%; Latinx 12.7%; Asian 18.2%; White 33.1%

Administration Fall 2018-19: Black 11.1%; Latinx 7.4%; Asian 0%; White 59.3%

-Hire a Dean of Diversity with an academic and research background in social justice that understands the intersections of our faculty, staff, and student populations and experience with addressing anti-blackness systemic racism by Fall 2021

-Increasing the representation of Dean and Administrative positions to reflect a more racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of Black and Latinx scholars and leaders respectively to 50% of the current positions by Fall 2021

-Support and provide consistent resources for the incoming Director for Africana Studies with faculty, mentoring, professional development and student support services

-Transition of the Africana Studies Program into a Department with continuous support from administration and not sole dependence on Mellon grant

-Allowing all Africana Studies courses to meet the college's general education Pathways curriculum by Fall 2021

-Appoint or recruit a commission of experienced academic scholars and staff who have focused on the increase, exposure, development and race, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives for the campus and communities

-Amplify and mandate consistent mentoring resources for Black and Latinx faculty, staff and administrators beyond hiring in order to improve and enhance retention rates. Develop a fund for Black/ Latinx staff and administration mentoring program by 2021

-Support direct and constant academic and financial supports to Black and Latinx faculty beyond the Diversity Hiring Initiative

- Expand the enrollment management strategy with targeted advertising, promotion and marketing to recruit and retain Black students, particularly from Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx, Long Island, Westchester and Upstate New York
- While the value and understanding of Freedom of Expression is valid, there needs to be a mechanism to facilitate a transformative justice process and trusted plan of action to address bias-related and hate crimes and establish sustainable remedial education components on campus, with the understanding that hateful behavior can interrupt community, educational environment and erode standards of civility for all
- Transparency and knowledge around how the formal complaint system functions as a means to uphold a safe working and learning space for Black students, staff and faculty. Promotion of collaborated trust that will address antiblackness issues with a corrective action plan
- By Fall 2021, begin a sustainable plan that would add administrative leverage, with college-funded staffing, to support SEEK and other student service programs that have proven track records of success in supporting students of color with the development of an initiative that provides support for Black and Brown students who do not meet the economic eligibility requirements, but who would benefit from guided support and community. This would increase retention and assist in the recruitment of Black students, particularly from Queens

Curriculum & Pedagogy:

-Academic Senate should create a subcommittee to lead this effort made up of administration, faculty, staff and student members to review and revise the current curriculum requirement by conducting a college-wide equity audit that promotes and improves authentic historical content across disciplines by Fall 2021

-The new curriculum will be stripped of ethnic supremacies of all kinds. Examples of equity audit questions:

Are the policy and instructional modifications put in place when students are unable to meet the department standards?

Does the curriculum utilize print and non-print materials that represent diverse groups?

Do recommended textbooks and other instructional materials reflect, as much as possible, the experiences and perspectives of diversity among racial, ethnic, language, religious and gender groups?

-Collaborate with P-20 guidance counselors throughout New York City to increase recruitment of Black and Latinx by 10% each via in-person speaking engagements at all schools especially in majority Black and Brown high schools

Campus & Student Services:

-Address the need of Black and Latinx students for culturally appropriate mental health services by hiring full-time staff that is culturally representative of the students. As of now and in the

past, we do not have Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin), Creole, Hindi, Japanese, and Spanish speaking counselor

-There is a dire need for critical provision of wrap-around services, similar to SEEK, for Black and Latinx Students who do not meet the financial eligibility of the program but who are in dire need of support

-There must be consistent and adequate funding and support for Black-led student programs, clubs, and organizations. Ensure all Black-led clubs with 20 members or more are funded annually from Student Affairs

-Provide and support a hazardous-free safe physical space for Black and Latinx students, faculty and staff to convene and facilitate healing, community, and support from the injurious effects of racial trauma

-Appoint a BLFSA Council, with representation from faculty, staff and students, to serve as a liaison and at least three representatives of the Queens College cabinet, council, the college-wide P&B, and other service providers within the divisions, and other administrative offices and suggest relevant programming that would support Black and Latinx populations. This Council will also serve as the venue for all reports of racist treatment on campus and be active leaders in the creation of an antiracist strategic plan

As a community at Queens College, we represent a plethora of subgroups that support the Black Lives Matter Movement, and all other movements for justice.

As members of the BLFSA and representatives of the CUNY community, we are ready to experience solidarity. As MLK, Jr stated, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." Queens College is an outstanding institution of higher education and needs to examine itself and redress the issues of injustices that exist at the college.