



*For A Better CWRU  
Racial Justice Proposal*

## *Student Experience*

### **Introduction:**

As of Fall 2019, African-American students comprise 4% of the undergraduate student body. Out of 5,150 students, there are 226 African Americans spread across nearly one-hundred disciplines. While these figures are alarming, the consistent decline in minority retention and graduation rates are even more staggering. This highlights two major concerns within the campus community. First, there is a fictitious encouragement of Black students to attend our university. A point which is often validated by the negligible effort to recruit in Cleveland and other majority black cities like Detroit. Second, there is limited support for Black students during their four years. Black/ African Americans are 20% more likely to report serious psychological distress than adult whites; yet, We need to have more counselors who specialize in this particular field. Enhancing the Black experience extends beyond the physical presence of black bodies on campus, we propose the following measures to create a more diverse, welcoming, and supportive campus environment.

### **Action Steps:**

1. It has been five months since the creation of the original proposal and three and a half months since we have received the Administration's response. We would like to know what actionable steps have been taken in the discussions with Advancement in order to raise more funds for the momentum scholarship and other Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.

#### *Office of Multicultural Affairs*

- a. The university needs to create a safe and inclusive space for BIPOC students. OMA is far too small of a space for the student population that it serves. Therefore, we need to make progress toward the Identity Center and need to commit to putting more resources toward the Identity Center.
  - i. Set a date for when the Identity Center will be completed and open.
  - ii. The Identity Center must be located in a convenient and easily accessible location on campus, ideally near the Tinkham Veale University Center.
  - iii. The university must allocate more money for scholarships targeted toward URM and diverse students.
    1. OMA would like to establish a Momentum Scholarship Fund
    2. If we allocated \$1 million to the Momentum Scholarship Fund, then that money will accrue about \$20,000 a year that can be used for the scholarship without ever drawing from the original \$1 million.

#### *Office of Inclusion, Diversity and Equal Opportunity*

- b. Diversity 360 Program
  - i. Needs more funding to do the following:
    1. Pay and train facilitators.
    2. Create a 2.0 version of the program.
    3. Ideally partner with outside organizations (Ex. Racial Equity Institute).

2. The Board of Trustees must create a student trustee position. While we understand that the Board of Trustees is its own entity, as students we believe that **the Board must adjust their leadership structure in a way that allows students to contribute to decision-making.** The student trustee position will be the easiest and most effective way for the students to feel as though we have a voice on the Board and that our viewpoints and opinions are being heard. Students should have representation that matches their financial input to the university.
3. While we understand that Student Success works hard to help the student body, everyone has not had success in connecting with their navigators. In order to mitigate this, we propose two different solutions. The first one is to assign each navigator to each college rather than to a variety of students under different majors and disciplines. Our second proposal is to give students the option to switch navigators in order to find one they better connect with. This would help navigators be better prepared for student questions.

#### *Navigators*

- a. Have Navigators handle specific colleges
    - i. Would help Navigators familiarize themselves with the inner workings of said colleges, and allow them to properly aid students
  - b. Allow students to switch Navigators
    - i. Helps students find a Navigator they are comfortable with.
    - ii. Should promote student interaction with Navigators
4. The student admission process leaves roommate selection up to students. However, it doesn't give students the resources to find potential roommates. Your roommate choice is something that can shape the freshman experience, and for students of color specifically, finding a roommate who is accepting and understanding of their background is integral to making their experience positive. Right now, the officers of the current freshman class create a Facebook group for the incoming freshman class to connect with each other. While this group can be useful, not everyone has Facebook, or may not feel comfortable posting publicly.
    - a. Create a system for students where they can create a profile upon admission. It can include a quick biography, hobbies, social media, etc.
      - i. Students can then see other students profiles and reach out if they are interested.
      - ii. This does not have to be an expansive system—just something that would allow students to easily find potential candidates.
      - iii. As students select roommates, they are taken out of the pool of eligible candidates.
      - iv. Consider incorporating this into the 1st year roadmap
  5. Many students on campus are not aware of how to recognize and address mental health issues. Mental Health resources should be more readily available for students. Students need resources that cater to their own personal needs.
    - a. Hire more diverse counselors who students of color can feel more comfortable speaking with.

- b. Many mental health resources like support groups are not known to the student body. Informing leaders such as residential assistants and orientation leaders about them would increase their visibility and usage by the student population.
  - c. Create flow diagrams about the counselling process and how to seek counseling. These diagrams will make it easier for students to understand the counseling process for themselves and for their peers. These diagrams should be distributed at Freshman Orientation and should be posted in student housing and on screens across campus.
  - d. The university must conduct a study about students' mental health along racial lines. If this study finds that BIPOC students are experiencing more mental health issues than their colleagues, then more funding needs to be dedicated specifically toward initiatives supporting the mental health of BIPOC students.
6. It is wrong to use financial aid to incentive BIPOC students to come to CWRU, then to raise tuition and fees so that the financial aid no longer covers what it would have in the offer of admission. When students commit to come to CWRU, CWRU should commit to supporting them.
- a. Financial aid in admissions offers should cover a percentage of tuition that remains constant throughout the four years a student spends at CWRU. For example, if tuition increases by \$3000 after a student has already enrolled at CWRU, their financial aid should increase proportionally.
  - b. Financial Aid should hold workshops about how to fill out FAFSA and other financial-aid related forms.

## *Faculty & Curriculum*

### **Introduction:**

A persistent and ubiquitous discontentment prevalent in our student body pertains to the underrepresentation of Black faculty at Case Western. African American/ Black professors make up just over 3% of all professors on Case Western campus as of Fall 2019. This figure has hardly improved since Fall 2012. The profound scarcity of professors who are Black has been and will continue to implicitly damage and demoralize Case Western students who are Black in their respective fields of study. This sends a strong racial message to not only the current students and professors but potential ones as well. The severe underrepresentation of faculty who are Black has serious implications such as faculty isolation and creating a vicious cycle of underrepresentation of people who are Black in educational and professional positions. The action steps designed will allow for the long-overdue remedy of the distorted faculty representation.

### **Action Steps:**

#### *Faculty Representation and Hiring Initiatives*

1. Address lack of Black representation in faculty and management through the creation of more professional development opportunities.
2. Create an opt-in directory of Black leaders on campus so students will know how to contact Black leaders.

3. Require every CWRU college and department to create biennial public reports detailing their diversity and inclusion initiatives and statistics. These reports should first be published in the 2021-2022 academic year.
4. Include student representatives in faculty hiring and curriculum review processes within each department.
5. Place more professors from underrepresented minority groups on the tenure-track or in other positions with the possibility of upward mobility.
6. Provide financial wherewithal for a rich and expansion selection of courses and diversity training to provide continued education and increased awareness around issues of race and racial justice.
7. Implement an investigation on Black faculty isolation by a nonpartisan third-party to understand how to better their experience and overall assistance on campus.

### *Implementation within the Writing Program*

8. Provide financial support for the Writing Program. All undergraduate students must complete courses in the Writing Program, so it is imperative that the university provides the the Writing Programs with the support it needs to implement anti-racist changes. The following action steps were created in collaboration with Writing Program leadership and have the complete support of the Writing Program.
  - a. Student Communication Internships & Community Engagement - develop opportunities for students to work for/with local (Cleveland-area) organizations and businesses on communication projects. Potential academic credit for a service-learning course (perhaps one credit for background research/reading, mentoring, and reflection on the experiences), with stipends for students to work with organizations that cannot otherwise pay for their time. Total Estimated Cost: \$500/student per semester.
  - b. Faculty Development Seminar - 1-week pedagogy seminar for faculty interested in teaching general education writing courses and/or integrating writing into their disciplinary courses. Total Estimated Cost: \$145,000/academic year.
    - i. Enrollment: 10 faculty x 2 sessions (Summer & Winter)
    - ii. Participant Compensation: research/discretionary funds for participation commitment to offer writing-intensive courses
    - iii. Leadership Compensation: 1/2-month salary + fringe for Writing Program Administrators to lead the seminars and provide ongoing support for faculty materials & supplies (textbooks, etc.)
  - c. Visiting Scholar Fund - Short-term (1-week) “residency” (or remote residency) for a scholar whose work addresses linguistic justice, to consult with the Writing Program Administration, visit classes, offer a community workshop, and provide a public lecture. Total Estimated Cost: \$10,000-\$15,000/academic year.
    - i. Spring 2021 Visiting Scholar (supported by Writers House, Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities): Dr. Vershawn Ashanti Young (April 2021)
  - d. Diversify Faculty - Establish a competitive post-doctoral fellowship for a visiting scholar who enhances the diversity of our faculty. Fellows will offer 2-4 courses over the course of the academic year, and pursue their research. Total Estimated Cost: \$75,000 per fellowship.

## *Community Engagement*

### **Introduction:**

In recent years, there has been a fractured relationship between CWRU and the Cleveland community. The Cleveland community is 53.5% Black. If our administration really "sees" and "hears" the outcries of Black members of CWRU, then it will better the relationship with the surrounding Cleveland community. It is evident that there is institutional racism present on campus. A majority of the custodial staff and dining hall workers are Cleveland residents who are Black while a majority of administrators and professors are white. By building on this relationship, the success of the CWRU community can facilitate the success of the larger Cleveland community and vice versa. The action steps presented will allow our community to grow and start to fix the negative relationship between CWRU and the greater Cleveland community.

### **Action Steps:**

#### *Campus and Surrounding Neighborhoods:*

1. Include student leadership in Little Italy leadership meetings, especially those involving business partners, and develop accountability protocols with Little Italy leadership
2. Raise awareness through training and educational programs about East Cleveland and surrounding communities for CWRU students, staff, and faculty. Support Know Your Neighbor's efforts to change orientation material and orientation leader/tour guide training to reflect this.
3. Develop and implement strategic partnership with the Center for Civic Engagement and Learning (CCEL) to promote civic engagement and community service projects throughout Greater Cleveland and East Cleveland.
4. Develop partnerships with minority owned businesses in the Greater Cleveland area and include those businesses in the list of preferred vendors for University events. This includes expanding the catering list to include minority food services and food trucks for first-year student orientation, University Program Board events, and other major events sponsored by the University.

#### *Community Access to University Library Services:*

5. Partner with the Cleveland Public Library (CPL) system & East Cleveland Public Library system in order to promote and advertise KSL for public use.
6. Partner with the Cleveland Public Library system to highlight available resources for the general public at university libraries on the CPL website.

#### *Recruitment Efforts:*

7. Expand list of outreach schools to include more institutions with underrepresented minority students (URM).
  - a. List of schools with significant URM populations for more targeted outreach
    - i. [List of schools for targeted outreach](#)

8. Create a system that tracks unresponsive high school counselors so that the Admissions office can know where to direct more effort in recruitment tactics. This would involve reaching out to people who influence and oversee the counselling system in the Cleveland public school system, Teach for America, and principals and other administration at unresponsive schools.
9. Create an official powerpoint that explains financial aid, fee-waivers, and scholarship opportunities for students with heightened financial need and distribute the powerpoint through a USB flash drive or other similar transportable device that can be given to students throughout Cleveland, East Cleveland, and other inner-ring suburbs.
10. Expand scholarship opportunities for local incoming students, specifically the Emerging Scholars Program, and increase advertisement of this program to Cleveland area schools.
11. Create more opportunities for local high school students to connect with current CWRU students. This would include creating a student-led recruitment team to work with administration in reaching out to students.
12. Host a prospective student day specifically for students from the Greater Cleveland area.
13. Extend Choices Fair to the general public and local middle school and high school students interested in learning about major and minor options and CWRU in general.
14. Student groups often do outreach events with local high schools, but a more centralized effort needs to be made to determine the needs of each school and organize outreach events to ensure that resources are fairly distributed.
15. High school research opportunities are available through labs on campus, but aren't widely advertised to local students. Departmental efforts need to focus on increasing and expanding recruitment for these positions.

*Community Town Halls:*

16. Bolster campus awareness of Know Your Neighbors (KYN) and the Social Justice Institute ((SJI) and their initiatives on community engagement. This would involve:
  - a. Supporting access to meeting spaces on CWRU's campus and at local community centers
  - b. Supporting and providing assistance to their campus safety task force and orientation changes reframing how neighboring communities are presented to new students
  - c. Advertise events and KYN monthly meetings to the student body, and create incentives for attending
  - d. Funding to bring local residents into writing program courses to educate students about the community.
17. Enhance and increase advertisements for community town halls through *The Daily* and USG communications.
18. Increase town hall frequencies to once per semester and ensure student representation at town hall meetings.

*Professional Development for Custodial and Dining Hall Staff:*

19. All CWRU employees and contractors should be able to benefit from one of the top universities in the country. Tuition incentives or tuition waivers for 1-2 classes per year should be provided to relieve the financial burden.

- a. Reevaluate the system of subcontracting to extend academic benefits to all those who work on CWRU's campus
20. Additional professional development services should be more accessible, and provided free of charge, to custodial and dining hall staff. Services could include career guidance and counseling, resume and cover letter assistance, and mock interviews. Professional development opportunities could take the form of in-person or virtual workshops and seminars.

## *CWRU Policing & Security*

### **Introduction:**

There is a need for reforms within the CWRU Police Department and presence of security. One point of conversation that has come up is that the police at our university are too present and are over-contacted. It is wasteful of everyone's time to involve the police when it is unnecessary and it is inconsiderate to expect students who have strained relationships with the police to speak with them. Often, there are other professionals that would be more suited to handle situations that are not dangerous. Furthermore, the relationship between CWRU Police and the students needs to be nurtured. In social settings with no danger, there is no need for the police to be lethally armed. As a result, student organizers should be given the option to request armed security at events, based on the number of attendees. There needs to be transparency in terms of the line item budget for CWRU police, as it would be useful in helping allocate funds in a way that is beneficial to the entire community of CWRU. Lastly, students should be represented by advocates in the HR review and hire processes of CWRU Police.

### **Action Steps:**

#### *Police and Security Conduct*

1. There must be greater transparency in the investigative process when complaints are filed against members of CWRU PD as to make sure all cases are addressed in a timely manner. Cases should be resolved within the **guaranteed window of time of 45 days** after the complaint was filed. Also, there should be **student advocates on the HR committee as a paid staff position whose express purpose is to advocate on behalf of the student who submitted the complaint**. The student advocate will make sure that the student's best interest is the top priority for the HR committee that reviews the case as well as make sure the student knows the status of their case.
2. While we understand that it might not be possible to completely separate CWRU EMS and PD, it would be beneficial for the student body to have reduced police presence on the scene of a medical emergency. The fear of police officers arriving with EMS is a barrier to care for many marginalized students and must be addressed. As of now, the default is for CWRU EMS and PD to be co-dispatched to all calls. However, an overwhelming majority of calls do not require PD presence. PD should only be present in cases in which it is absolutely necessary, such as being needed to control traffic flow or crew safety. **CWRU EMS should be dispatched to the calls without PD and after assessing if the scene is safe alert dispatch if PD is necessary or not**. Furthermore, for psychiatric emergencies, the counselor on-call should be available by means other than phone. **Rather than sending CWRU PD for those calls with CWRU EMS, the counselor on-call should be sent in person to de-escalate the situation.**



3. We are in agreement that a better relationship needs to be formed between the students and CWRU police. At the same time, we realize that many of the students are fearful of the police. To better the relationship, we offer the following solutions: **have officers attend events in casual clothing, allow student organizers the option to choose whether or not officers are lethally armed, and encourage officers to engage students on a more personal level.**
4. No hiring system is perfect, that is understandable. To improve the hiring process of CWRU police officers, we suggest **annual racial and deescalation field assessments of both potential employees and those currently employed.** Furthermore, student advocates and a psychologist should be involved in the hiring process.

*Informing the CWRU Community*

5. The **CWRU PD line item budget should be made public** to the student body so that we can see where our tuition dollars are going and assess for ourselves if the money can be better utilized to improve the community.
6. **Improve Resident Assistant training programs to inform them of different de-escalation methods available as opposed to contacting law enforcement in non-emergency situations.** Clarify the difference between emergency and non-emergency situations to campus residents to discourage unnecessary calls to law enforcement.

**Notes:**

Click [here](#) for the 2019 Annual Diversity Report. It does touch somewhat on the numbers that are associated with efforts around faculty representation. I was putting this on our radar as a reference point as it pertains to the numbers being included in this report.

*References:*

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