

Black Student Union Demands
Warren Wilson College Response
June 26, 2020

Warren Wilson College affirms the statement of the Black Student Union in the preamble to the Demands that “This institution must prioritize the safety of past, present, and future Black community members who have experienced great depths of trauma, current and generational.” The College affirms that, as further stated in the preamble to the Demands, “This is a great opportunity and time to lean in and allow Black and Brown voices to be amplified.” The College is committed to listening to your voices and to acting for policy and cultural changes that are critical to dismantling institutional racism and creating a safe educational and working environment for Black, Indigenous & People of Color (BIPOC).

To help amplify these voices and provide additional BIPOC leadership to work with the Cabinet, the Board of Trustees, the WIDE Office and the Warren Wilson community to effect these changes, the College will immediately commit to the hiring of two new positions:

- 1) **Director of DEI Initiatives.** Under the guidance and direction of the President of the College and the VP of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Strategy/Chief Diversity Officer-Cabinet Level (TBD, see 2) below), the Director of DEI Initiatives will lead the development and implementation of proactive diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in support of the College’s strategic plan to create a learning and working environment where all have an opportunity to succeed. The position is designed to assist in the efforts toward building and sustaining a diverse and culturally vibrant campus. The Director of DEI Initiatives reports directly to the President of the College, until such time as a VP of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Strategy/Chief Diversity Officer-Cabinet Level is appointed, and will work closely with the Director of WIDE in Student Life.
- 2) **Vice President of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Strategy/Chief Diversity Officer.** This is a Cabinet position reporting directly to the President of the College. The VP/CDO will work with College leadership and all stakeholders to create a comprehensive plan to build structures and implement policies to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the center of all we do, threaded throughout the Strategic Plan and a defining characteristic of our educational program. The College will endeavor to ensure that there is adequate financial, personal, and professional support for the individual in this position. This will be a national search commencing with the opening of the Fall semester and concluding

when the search is successful.

Additionally, the College adopted a 2022 Strategic Plan in 2019 with a Strategic Imperative addressing diversity, equity and inclusion:

Strategic Imperative 3: The College is unwavering in our commitment to the dignity of all people – particularly those populations who have been both historically oppressed and continue to experience systemic oppression. While we value the breadth of diversity necessary for a rich campus culture, we also recognize the particular challenge and opportunity for growth and leadership around race, noting that such a focus necessarily intersects with deepening efforts around other aspects of identity (such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexuality, class, and worldview). We are committed to a culture of educational access and ensuring that students and employees from a diverse range of identities and experiences will thrive in this community.

It is incumbent upon the College that we continue to address this critical piece of our Strategic Plan.

The specific actions outlined below will be inclusive, with multiple points of accountability. In order to ensure timely and consistent progress specific individuals are identified as having the primary ownership over the initiative (*in italics*).

Reframing Campus-Wide Dialogue: The College agrees with the BSU that “the campus-wide dialogue becomes an exploration of mini interactive workshops throughout a three-hour block” and supports “the hiring of off campus facilitators for these discussions, or qualified on campus representatives who must receive additional compensation for their real physical and emotional labor.” The specific interactive workshops will be determined by the Director of DEI Initiatives, the Director of WIDE, College leadership and community members, and members of the student body, working collaboratively. The College commits to working to ensure attendance and participation from the entire Warren Wilson community of faculty, staff and students, with the specific means of this to be determined. *Director of DEI Initiatives (new position), Director of WIDE Clarissa Harris, Cabinet.*

Enhancement of Work Crew Cultural Competency: The College agrees with the BSU that the work program, as an integral part of the WWC educational model, should play an important part in addressing implicit bias, micro-aggression and systemic racism. The

WPO and our summer work program working group have been exploring a plan for the addition of educational sessions as part of student participation in the work program. The intention is to create these for this fall using a combination of online presentations and small group follow up sessions that can be more interactive. Within this work curriculum, students will complete a certain number of sessions each term. Specific sessions addressing the topics mentioned in the Demands will be mandatory. We will work with students and staff on campus who are interested in helping us to determine community resources for presenting material and leading follow up sessions. In addition, we will also build on our work from the past four years when we included professional development focused on DEI issues in supervisor retreats each year. We used a combination of external and internal facilitators, large group presentations and small group discussions, and we will continue to use that model to incorporate this work into supervisor retreats at least once each year on an ongoing basis. *Vice President for Applied Learning Cathy Kramer, Associate Dean of Work Paul Bobbitt, and the WPO.*

Counseling Center: This demand centers around the expansion of services for students of color by a qualified POC counselor. The College currently contracts with a counselor on an hourly basis who is a person of color, partially in response to previous demands. The College commits to doubling that amount of time (the maximum amount of time the counselor can devote to WWC work in addition to her private practice at this time). The College further commits to locating more off-campus counseling options, acknowledging that a survey of counseling services in the area showed all POC counselors in the area at full caseloads. Full-time employees have access to free counseling through our Employee Assistance Plan, and the College will work with the EAP to identify counselors in this plan who are people of color beginning immediately. *Vice President for Student Life Paul Perrine, Director of Human Resources Heather Schalk.*

Scholarships, Grants, & Funding: Warren Wilson College currently has two endowed scholarships — the Alma Shippy '54 Scholarship and the Earl Mayne Scholarship — for students of color. According to the donor intent, they do not have requirements regarding grades, major, or socioeconomic background and are irrevocable to the extent our overarching financial aid policies allow. We added these as giving options on Giving Day this year and grew both endowments as a result. We will continue to prioritize additional fundraising for these funds to continue to grow. In consultation with Financial Aid and Finance, we could adjust the selection process for allocating these funds — and the BSU could create and evaluate an application for the allocation of the scholarship dollars that would be awarded above and beyond other institutional, work, and federal, and state aid dollars, if the BSU would like to do so. Should the BSU choose to be part of the selection process for these funds, we could work together to develop the application process this

summer and fall, invite applications winter and spring, select students by next April 2021, so that the first round of these funds would be allocated to students for the academic year 2021-22. *Vice President for Advancement Zanne Garland, will develop an application process with BSU, Director of Advancement Services Kelly Hallock, will manage logistics of the selection process, Director of Financial Aid Lori Lewis will award scholarships.*

WWC [George Floyd Memorial] Scholarship Fund for Black Student Leadership: In consultation with the President and CFO, the Advancement Office recommends that we seed the establishment of this Scholarship Fund (specific name to be determined with community consultation) by restricting \$25,000 of our existing endowed scholarship funds, so that the institution invests its own dollars to establish the fund and it is immediately invested with other endowed funds. The first awardee can be selected in the Spring of 2021 to add to their financial aid and scholarship package by academic year 2021-22. This scholarship would be irrevocable to the extent our overarching financial aid policies allow. The Advancement Office would then prioritize fundraising for this new fund alongside the other scholarships listed above to increase the principal. Because endowed fund changes must be approved by the Board of Trustees, we commit to drafting a resolution to make this change and request that the Trustees establish this new fund in July 2020. Advancement will work with the BSU to create the endowed fund agreement and determine the process by which the student in a leadership role is selected. *Vice President for Advancement Zanne Garland will create the resolution and work with the BSU to establish a permanent endowed fund agreement. Director of Advancement Services Kelly Hallock, will manage logistics of the selection process. Director of Financial Aid Lori Lewis will allocate the funds.*

Connect and Build Upon a Relationship with Black Asheville: The College agrees and affirms that “Warren Wilson College [will] take more action in incorporating Asheville’s rich and deep Black history into campus events like homecoming, graduation, open houses, etc. This can be done by connecting more to Black leadership in Asheville and creating bonds between Warren Wilson College and the broader Asheville community.” One of the ways to do this will be to build on our community partnerships established through our Center for Community Engagement (CCE). We have been working to increase our connections and opportunities with both BIPOC run and serving organizations. There are also many opportunities to engage with local activists and organizations around racial justice. While we cannot add an additional position at this time, the College commits to supporting the staff in CCE in prioritizing this work so that each staff member can devote time to participation. The staff will conduct an audit of our current partnerships and move to devoting more of our resources, including crew time, to connections with Black Asheville and other BIPOC initiatives.

Vice President for Applied Learning Cathy Kramer, Associate Dean for Community Engagement Shuli Archer, Assistant Director of Community Engagement Jeremy Lett, AmeriCorpsVISTA Heaven Valentine (2020-21).

Additionally, the Advancement Office will build on our relationship with the YMI Cultural Center in Asheville. We have held an event there, have a relationship with their Board Chair, and will begin to grow that relationship through proposing a co-hosted virtual event in Fall of 2020 to build funding and visibility for the YMI and WWC on a shared priority topic. Their staff member, Jefferson Ellison, reached out to us in June to discuss: programming, in-kind services/products, financial contributions, and media/advertising, and we are following up with him this month. *Vice President for Advancement Zanne Garland, Community Relations Manager Heather Wingert.*

Retention and Enrollment of Black Students: The College agrees and affirms that “Current retention programs must be reevaluated through a DEI lens, which requires building up the WIDE office and hiring more WIDE staff- like a Co-Director, starting a POC Bridge program, and a POC mentorship program.” There are already plans in place to start the POC Bridge program and the POC mentorship program in Fall 2020. We commit to providing more support for the WIDE program and will begin with an analysis of budget in consultation with the Director of WIDE and the Director of DEI Initiatives (new position). We will also examine our enrollment and marketing practices with a DEI lens and with that same focus, review our support for BIPOC students offered through our Integrated Advising program. Advancement will continue to fundraise for the WIDE Office as well. *Vice President for Student Life Paul Perrine, Director of WIDE Clarissa Harris, Director of DEI Initiatives (new position), Vice President for Applied Learning Cathy Kramer and Associate Dean for Integrated Advising, Brooke Millsaps, Interim Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing, Brian Liechti.*

Black Faculty and Staff: This demand centers on the institutional support of BIPOC faculty and staff, the hiring of more BIPOC faculty and staff, salary review of BIPOC faculty and staff, and an additional Human Resources position to focus on these priorities. While we have determined that the existing number of staff is appropriate for the size of our institution at this time, the College agrees that there should be a clear focus on the hiring of BIPOC faculty and staff for all of the reasons outlined in this demand. We commit to the hiring of a Cabinet-level DEI professional (described earlier) who will work with Human Resources, the President, and Cabinet to ensure anti-bias hiring processes and procedures with the goal of increasing employees from diverse

backgrounds. To increase our efforts, we will also augment existing efforts in hiring a diverse workforce by advertising positions on the following websites: HigherEdJobs as a priority diversity posting, Diversity, WorkplaceDiversity, PDN Recruits, Black Career Network, Black Jobs, and iHispano to name a few. *Vice President for Academic Affairs Jay Roberts, Human Resources Director Heather Schalk, Vice President for Administration and Finance Belinda Burke.*

POC Student Center: There have been several locations for this in the past, which may have been deemed unsatisfactory. Student Life commits to the location and renovation of an acceptable space, accessible to all community members of color, with that work beginning immediately. *Vice President for Student Life Paul Perrine, Director of WIDE Clarissa Harris, Facilities Director Clarence Tate.*

Community Care for Racial Student Organizations: “[BSU] demand[s] that all student racial organizations receive institutional subventions in order to promote and facilitate engaging campus wide- programming, along with fostering connectedness amongst one another through intercommunal outings and events.” Currently, this is administered by WIDE and Student Life, with the programming budget centralized in WIDE. Student Life commits to conversation with WIDE and the BSU about the Demands, as well as to subsequent actions to improve connections with these organizations. The College also commits to actively supporting BSU’s “demand that community members show up for and fully support events that are facilitated by said racial student organizations throughout the academic year” and will seek ways to encourage and support such attendance as well as highlight their occurrence through college communication and media. *Vice President of Student Life Paul Perrine, Vice President for Academic Affairs Jay Roberts, Director of WIDE Clarissa Harris, Director of DEI Initiatives (new position).*

More Required BSU Funding: This demand requests increased funding “to create more engaging and interactive campus-wide programming...as well as facilitate intercommunal programming to deepen the Black community on campus” [to] “ensure that we all are invested in this necessary work.” The College agrees that such programming should be cross-sectional, commits to reviewing existing budgets and sharing that information with BSU and other leadership, and will consider the creation of a different budget structure and funding model, with programming being “owned” by a multitude of offices and divisions across campus as suggested in the BSU demands. *Vice President for Student Life Paul Perrine, Vice President for Administration and Finance Belinda Burke.*

Equity requirements embedded in every academic department: The College agrees

with and affirms that “White supremacy is embedded in every academic discipline, and the voices that are taught are too often predominantly white and eurocentric.” Curricular matters and decisions are the domain of the teaching faculty in partnership with the office of Academic Affairs. The College agrees that we must increase our efforts to promote Black voices and perspectives in every discipline and to work concretely toward diversity, equity, and inclusion across the curriculum working with the faculty. To that end, as we complete the five-year cycle of our Quality Enhancement Plan on *Building Diversity*, we will have data on what students have learned about diversity as well as their lived experiences with diversity, equity, and inclusion on our campus. This will help inform our work moving forward. We will partner with the new Director of DEI Initiatives and the Director of the Center for Faculty Innovation and Excellence to build out more faculty development opportunities to diversify curriculum in every discipline and within individual courses. We also commit to tracking faculty work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the annual reporting process (required of all faculty). *Vice President for Academic Affairs Jay Roberts, Director of DEI Initiatives (new position), Director of the Center for Faculty Innovation and Excellence Gary Hawkins.*

Caucuses to discuss equity: BSU demands “that once a semester caucuses be held for students, faculty, and staff to come together to discuss the state of equity at Warren Wilson. This will be a time to evaluate how we can adjust and improve inclusion through academic, administrative, crew, and student structures. Two caucuses should be held simultaneously, one for the folk of color and another for white folk. This will allow everyone to speak honestly and freely, without jeopardizing the safety and comfort of Black community members.” Warren Wilson College commits to organizing college-wide caucuses each semester facilitated by volunteer members of our community. These will be embedded in our calendar in a way that allows all those who are interested to participate in the conversations. *Cabinet.*

BSU Student Trustee Representative: The Board of Trustees’ Bylaws currently provide for 6 ex officio positions: 2 student trustees, 1 faculty trustee, 1 staff trustee, 1 alumni board trustee, and 1 Presbyterian trustee. The President of the College commits to bringing this issue to the Board of Trustees for discussion and resolution. This conversation with the board chair and board officers has already begun. *President Lynn Morton, Board Chair Lach Zemp.*

Consistent and thorough institutional reports: The College commits to creating a more robust, transparent, and consistent reporting process to monitor and disclose our work in DEI. The annual tracking, organization, and publication of relevant data will be completed in collaboration between the Institutional Research Office, the Vice President

of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Strategy/Chief Diversity Officer, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, along with assistance from other relevant offices at the College. *Director of Institutional Effectiveness Allyson Hettrick, Vice President for Academic Affairs Jay Roberts*

Create clear accountability structures: The Demands includes “... that Warren Wilson amend the student code of conduct and faculty contracts to include a process of accountability for actions that compromise the safety and wellbeing of BIPOC at Warren Wilson. The development of this structure should be led by BIPOC community members, especially DEI staff and faculty who will be additionally compensated for their real physical and emotional labor.” *As soon as appointed, the Director of DEI Initiatives will work with the President of the College to charge Academic Affairs, Human Resources and Student Life with specific actions and goals towards the creation of clear accountability structures.*

Conclusion:

Warren Wilson College agrees with and affirms all 16 of the BSU Demands and commits to specific actions, timelines, and accountability structures to work faithfully and consistently towards dismantling institutional racism and creating a safe educational and working environment for people of color. The College pledges to commit to an inclusive and transparent process that will involve all people and all areas at the College to make specific decisions to enact these changes and ensure that everyone in the community is responsible for and accountable for our climate and culture.

The officers of the Board of Trustees have reviewed and discussed this document and will bring it to the July 2020 meeting for further discussion and ratification.

Signed this 26th day of June, 2020

Cabinet Members

Lynn Morton, President

Jay Roberts, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Paul Perrine, Vice President for Student Life

Cathy Kramer, Vice President for Applied Learning

Belinda Burke, Vice President for Administration and Finance

Zanne Garland, Vice President for Advancement

Brian Liechti, Interim Vice President for Enrollment/Marketing