

Indigenous Student Association Demands for Educational and Institutional Reform

Warren Wilson College Official Response

October 13, 2020

(ISA Demand listed in bold; WWC Response listed in italics)

Demand: Cultural competency training for all teachers at the start of every year to be taught by a team of Indigenous exclusive educators. Deadline: Fall Semester 2021

Response: We will engage faculty and staff in Cultural Competency Training and Development across the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) spectrum through workshops led by a consulting group recommended by the WIDE office in Spring 2021. We are also currently exploring options for workshops and trainings from Indigenous exclusive educators and have reached out to several Indigenous-led organizations regionally. Educating our entire campus on a range of DEI related topics, issues, and concerns will be ongoing and continuous. Because of the broad range of topics and concerns, it is not possible to guarantee that we will focus exclusively on one identity group every year.

Demand: Classes which focus on certain cultures or groups must have textbooks (or other academic material) written by Indigenous peoples of those groups (see list of classes) Deadline: Fall Semester 2021

Response: Academic Affairs is in the process of asking faculty to set specific DEI goals for each Department and to submit a DEI Engagement Plan by May 2021. Part of this work will include a review of relevant curriculum to ensure appropriate coverage, readings or other material from Indigenous authors. It is important to recognize that curricular decisions are the sole domain of the faculty and cannot be mandated from the Administration. In addition, the College (as almost all colleges and universities do) has a statement about “academic freedom” in the Faculty Handbook, and also in the [College Catalog](#). This principle states, in part: “In the interest of promoting intellectual inquiry, the development of knowledge, and the open exchange of ideas, Warren Wilson College recognizes that professors have the right to engage in intellectual debate, research, artistic endeavors, and inquiry without fear of censorship or retaliation. Faculty members have the right to remain true to their intellectual and pedagogical commitments, and express ideas and perspectives in speech, in writing, in publications, and through electronic communication, both on and off campus, without fear of sanction, so long as that expression does not significantly impair the rights of others.”

Demand: The language surrounding Indigenous cultures in the classroom must be changed immediately (see list of offensive words/phrases). Deadline: Immediately

Response: We will widely circulate the ISA slide deck of [Inappropriate and Offensive Vocabulary, Remarks, Phrases and Questions](#) (begins at slide 6), as well as the [Cultural Appropriation slide deck](#). Additionally, we will host a series of focused conversations with faculty on the theme of inclusive teaching practices and curricula later this October and again at the January 2021 Faculty Retreat. The issues and language raised by the ISA Demands will be raised and discussed as part of those conversations, and as part of the Campus-wide Dialogues and Caucusing.

Demand: If other complaints arise there must be an Indigenous counselor to whom students can voice their complaints and who will be sufficiently paid for this work. Deadline: Fall Semester 2021

Response: As a small college with limited resources, we are unable to make a specific hire for an Indigenous counselor. The WIDE Director position serves as the primary student support in this regard. We are looking into a specific telehealth network that would allow students to have access to multiple BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) counselors, and we will make a decision about this network before the end of the Fall semester.