

August 29, 2020

BLACK LIVES MATTER CALL TO ACTION

The current political climate has presented a defining moment for The College of New Jersey. While we have been confined in our homes due to COVID-19, we have used this time to deeply reflect not only about our physical proximity to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but also about the pandemic of racist behavior of some police officers towards African Americans. The senseless deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd, just to name a few, will forever be etched in our national collective consciences. In a united chorus, we heard people of all backgrounds and nationalities say that BLACK LIVES MATTER.

National events have implications for TCNJ. We have to ask ourselves the question: What are we doing at TCNJ to ensure that our campus is welcoming, respectful, and safe for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other underrepresented and minoritized populations? Are we paying attention to the concerns of these groups so that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated in the future?

The time is right for us to do what is right. The time is now for the College to take bold, courageous steps to make decisions that demonstrate our actions toward improving the living, learning, and working environment for BIPOC, underrepresented and minoritized groups. While recognizing that history is evolving, we want to be on the right side of history when future generations look back on the action, or inaction, of The College of New Jersey.

The recommendations contained in this call to action represent the collective work over the summer by the Campus Diversity Council (CDC). Some of the recommendations are operational in scope, and could be adopted at the unit, department, or divisional level. Other recommendations have policy implications that will require action by TCNJ's Shared Governance. It is noteworthy that other groups outside of CDC have prepared demands to create systemic change at TCNJ. Specifically, a faculty group drafted a Commitment to Anti-Racism Action, and TCNJ Student Government created its own list of demands.

The recommendations in this call to action are grounded in the principles of inclusive excellence, with a particular emphasis on the BLACK LIVES MATTER Movement. It is the belief of CDC that when BLACK LIVES MATTER only then can we demonstrate that ALL LIVES WILL MATTER.

REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the population of our BIPOC students, faculty and staff mirrors the BIPOC population within the state of New Jersey.

August 29, 2020

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when we create pipeline programs to increase the presence of BIPOC tenure-line and adjunct faculty within four years (2024) at a rate that reflects their representation within the state of New Jersey.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the College hires BIPOC employees at a rate that reflects their representation within the state of New Jersey.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when 15% of the student body is Black. Currently, Black students comprise approximately 6% of the student body, in contrast to Blacks being 15% of the population in New Jersey. The College must take aggressive steps to increase the presence of Black students on campus, paying particular attention to recruiting students from South Jersey. Their acceptance to TCNJ should accompany a merit-based scholarship.

CURRICULAR CHANGES

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when academic leadership incorporates a mechanism into the faculty evaluation process whereby faculty are also reviewed on their ability to create an inclusive classroom.

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when incoming first-year students are required to take an online course on equity and inclusion prior to registering for classes.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when there are positive residential experiences that promote mutual respect between residential students and the Division of Student Affairs. This should not be limited to programming but also to include professional development on cultural competency from a number of offices and resources.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the college reaffirms its commitment to provide housing throughout the academic year (ie., breaks) for students, which will benefit BIPOC populations, as well as those with documented housing insecurities and/or International students.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the menu in all eating venues on campus offers a diversity of food offerings, not just during special emphasis months (e.g, Black History Month) but throughout the entire academic year.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when student clubs and organizations develop plans for becoming equitable and racially inclusive. Organizations should be evaluated on their ability to become more inclusive. An example of this would be for organizations to complete a scorecard that reflects elements of equity and inclusion.

August 29, 2020

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the College creates vibrant programs, services, and support to first generation students and their families in their quest to navigate the historical barriers that exist in higher education.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when there are safe spaces for students to create community and amplify their voices. As part of the College's vision to create an inclusive environment for those who live and learn at TCNJ, space and funding should be allocated for the creation of an inter-cultural center that supports the needs of BIPOC and other underrepresented and minoritized groups on campus.

REVISIONS TO THE CAMPUS CALENDAR

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when MLK Jr. Holiday is observed as a day of honor for Dr. King. The MLK Jr. Holiday must be removed from the energy day schedule and restored/observed as a national day of service. Employees could be offered a flexible/floating day and the ability to choose to participate in or sponsor programs on campus during the holiday.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when we rename Columbus Day to Indigeneous Peoples' Day and create an annual series of lectures, programs, activities, etc. that engages the community on the significance of changing the historical narrative, while honoring the contributions of Indigeneous people in the U.S.

POLICY REVIEW

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the College conducts an equity policy audit of historical and policy documents with the goal of erasing structural barriers for BIPOC and other underrepresented and minoritized groups to ensure equal treatment and opportunity to these members of our community.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when we show our commitment to the development and upward mobility of building services employees (who represent the largest population of Black employees on campus) and create a leadership development program exclusively for this cohort of employees.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when we provide opportunities to build cultural competency and coalition building with BIPOC and other underrepresented and minoritized groups at the College through mandatory professional development and annual workshops for all faculty and staff.

August 29, 2020

TRENTON/EWING/CORPORATE COMMUNITY

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when TCNJ focuses predominantly on anti-black racism and establishes a Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Center (either formally through the AAC&U or through a grassroots effort). This will create opportunities for campus and external stakeholders (including alumni) to engage in "a comprehensive, national and community-based process to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, and to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism" (W.K. Kellogg Foundation 2020).

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the College hosts an annual campus-wide celebration for Black History Month. Guests from the local Trenton/Ewing/Corporate community should be invited to attend this event and/or participate.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the College establishes pipeline programs with the Trenton/Ewing public schools to prepare students for College readiness, with the goal of increasing the admission of BIPOC students to TCNJ.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the College develops a jail to work pipeline program for residents of the Trenton/Ewing community who have committed targeted crimes to have the opportunity to receive job training and/or employment at TCNJ.

Black lives will matter at TCNJ when the executive management of auxiliary services (entities who do business at TCNJ) reflects the demographics of the BIPOC population in the state of New Jersey. Additionally, auxiliary services employees should feel a sense of belonging and appreciation for the contributions they provide to the campus community.