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As our elected officials, business leaders and individuals start to take a serious look at the historical and persistent racist policies, practices and behaviors that Black people continue to face in this country, we are reaching out to Ohio University administration to ask: What are you going to do to eradicate racism at this institution? How can Ohio University be a leader in rooting out racism?

In that spirit, we strongly encourage Ohio University administration to present your vision for identifying and uprooting racial inequity and discrimination in policy, practice and outcomes toward achieving racial equity at Ohio University for Black people.

Ohio University has not yet acknowledged its own institutional racism. This is most evident in the hiring of Black faculty and staff, student recruitment and retention, disparate compensation, promotion into leadership positions, marginalization of Black faculty in the Ohio University colleges, schools and departments, and the absence of Black voices in decision making in general and with issues that concern our community in particular. The announcement of the George Floyd Scholarship demonstrates Ohio University's unwillingness or lack of awareness in how it continues to function as a fountainhead of racial discrimination and insensitivity. The George Floyd scholarship, while well-intentioned seems to be an empty gesture (changes neither the institution nor outcomes for students) that ignores, deflects and continues the same path of racial discrimination embedded at every level of this institution. Not only has this administration attempted to capitalize on this tragedy but has invoked our pain and tragic loss by disseminating a scholarship that will in no way explicitly benefit Black students. When racism has not been named and called out by administration first, instituting this particular scholarship that will exist amidst ongoing racism, is an insult. If you perhaps question whether or not racism exists here, simply ask the body of Black faculty, staff, administrators and students who contribute to the collective functioning of Ohio University.

Regarding the scholarship, we are also concerned whether or not a significant number of Black faculty, staff, administrators, students and parents were consulted at any point during discussions of the scholarship, and whether you considered what harm could be caused in the naming and description of the scholarship. Indeed, honoring the names of those who have both advocated for racial justice and have senselessly lost their lives doing so matters, however, this approach at this time is inappropriate, insufficient, and retraumatizing.

Your one size fits all approach to diversity must not continue if you are sincere in being a real agent of change and most importantly a leader in equity in higher education, a philosophy which Ohio University continues to embrace in speech but little action.

Although it should never fall to Black people to tell those in power how to change the systems they had no hand in creating, we offer you a start of actual and immediate changes this university can engage, if it is sincere in its mission for equity and inclusion for its Black community.

We implore you to take the time to not only address this list, but to also find ways to eradicate racial injustice and discrimination particularly as it concerns Black people from every level of this institution over the next year, and develop a strategic plan to eradicate all anti-Black policies, practices, behaviors and attitudes at Ohio University. Below are action-items rooted in our history, collective experiences and research that you can take up.

1. Although we understand a call was made from the NC University President to start such a scholarship we must be cognizant of Ohio's racial injustices that must be called out. We encourage you to change the name of the scholarship, since at this moment it serves as an exploitative gesture. More importantly, commit to provide a full 4-year scholarship specifically for Black students. We also encourage you to ensure that the scholarship is comprehensive to include tuition, room, board and a living stipend with the necessary support to facilitate a successful experience and matriculation to graduation.
2. Examine the data concerning pay inequity across colleges, schools and departments. Raise the salaries of Black faculty to those of their white counterparts with similar experiences in their departments, schools and colleges. Black women and men continue to be paid less than their white counterparts even in the same departments.
3. Include Black faculty in all decisions that concern Black students.
4. Create and implement a plan to employ cohort hires of Black faculty over the next 2-7 years, every year with support from Black faculty. Over the last 10 years few Black faculty have been hired at OU.
5. Select Black faculty for administrative positions (Deans, Associate Deans, Assoc Provost etc.).
6. Select Black faculty to lead some of the most important college committees so they may have a say in the direction of our university particularly in the academic arena.
7. Hire Black people in HR and put people with a mind toward equity, in charge of continuously reviewing hiring practices and ensuring equity in recruitment, hiring and retention of Black faculty and making necessary adjustments when OU equity goals fall short.
8. Ensure that HR and Black faculty representatives are included in discussions regarding offers made to potential new hires, to make sure those conversations and offers are actually equitable and without racial bias.
9. Track the number of faculty who apply for faculty positions, who are included in actual interviews both by phone/video, who are brought to campus, and who are actually hired. Make sure there is full transparency in hiring practices and offers across the university.

10. Create a database to track how OU is doing concerning racial equity in all areas particularly concerning the Black campus community (disaggregate the data).
11. Deliberately and rigorously recruit Black faculty. The highest number of Black faculty at Ohio University at any given time at least since 2006 was 40 based on institutional data available. As of 2018 Black faculty stood at 30 out of more than 600 faculty, representing 0.05% of the faculty population.
12. Deliberately and rigorously recruit Black students. At a minimum the percentage of Black students should be representative of the state of Ohio. OU has never exceeded 6.4% of Black student enrollment at the Athens campus according to your own institutional data and stands at only 5.7% as of 2019.
13. Establish sustained and integrated structures and pathways that will provide wrap-around support for the academic, social and emotional needs of Black students.
14. Hire admissions coordinators for specific and intentional outreach to college-bound Black students and families.
15. Routinely, track, maintain and respond to areas where racism continues to be most persistent.
16. Execute a curriculum plan inclusive of Black history, culture and experience throughout all schools and colleges.
17. Strongly and explicitly support the historical mission and goals of African American Studies. Black students often seek out African American Studies as safe spaces and maintaining this focus will function to sustain Black students at OU and to recruit Black students to OU.
18. Implement exit interviews of Black students, staff, administrators and faculty with Black HR staff for the purpose of feedback and public reporting, and to help identify areas of concerns for the retention and recruitment of Black faculty, staff, administrators, and students.
19. Address student evaluations where students participate in racial attacks and rhetoric to diminish Black faculty in those evaluations. Students who verbally racially attack Black faculty should not be allowed to hide behind anonymity. Faculty are trained to provide respectful and ethical feedback to students and our students should be held to the same standards.
20. Track professors who routinely fail Black students and address and remedy these clear biases.
21. Create a system that allows Black faculty in hostile and unsupportive departments the option to transfer to other colleges and departments at Ohio University such as AAS which is interdisciplinary & multidisciplinary, and which may provide a supportive environment instead of losing them to other institutions.
22. For those departments that have a history of such racial hostility, activate HR and other bodies to work closely with them to change the culture of those departments to one of equity and inclusion for Black people.
23. Create a database and a forum to submit racial complaints experienced as Black faculty, staff and students.
24. Task all Deans with developing a racial equity strategic plan that directly outlines how they are addressing racial discrimination and inequity in their colleges, and their plan for dismantling it over the next 1-5 years.

25. Make all data concerning advances and failures in the pursuit of racial equity at Ohio University publicly accessible.
26. Establish a committee that reports directly to the President-- A President's Committee on Racial Equity and Progress
27. Given the University's decision to resume face to face classes in the fall and the research that shows that COVID-19 has affected Black people at higher rates, share a plan that considers the safety of the entire Ohio University community and particularly the Black community that is disproportionately vulnerable.
28. Routinely scrutinize all barriers to racial equity.

Although the Black faculty at Ohio University may be small, our desire, commitment and need for a just and equitable Bobcat community is very strong and we will remain resilient and persistent in holding our leadership and our fellow white colleagues and other non-Black colleagues interested in moving the needle of racial justice forward, Accountable!

Words without explicit and real change maintain our current systems of inequity.

Thank you for your time. We hope you will do all you can to see a more racially Just Ohio University!

Respectfully,

Representative Members of the Ohio University Black Faculty Association

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cc: Athens Messenger
Faculty Senate
OU AAUP
OU NAACP