

In light of the recent unprovoked murders of Black people in the United States, scores of universities have published statements reflecting their solidarity with the African diaspora as well as their institutional commitments to diversity. Western Washington University is no different in this regard. Western has agreed to open conversations, reach out to Black students and consider how it might support national change. What it has not done, however, is commit to real, tangible change that will significantly impact the lives of its current and future Black students. To be clear, Black Student Organizations are tired of being used as tokens, whose needs are only brought forth when there is a new hashtag trending. We have always expressed our needs explicitly, and yet it seems as though Western Washington University and the Associated Students only acknowledge our needs when saying "Black Lives Matter" is socially acceptable. Posting "Enough is Enough" on Western's homepage, might seem to be an appropriate, politically correct response; however, it does nothing to address the very real concerns we have continually brought forth. Beyond issuing idle words, what lasting change is underway for Black students at our university? In the aftermath of multiple acts of anti-Black violence, will the university see its complicity in everyday racism and its lack of real change to support its Black students as less violent than those perpetrated by the police?

We are writing this statement to demand that you start with us first. Fix what has been broken for decades on this campus, before committing to stand with the nation and the world for racial justice. In the event our previously expressed needs have escaped your memory, we are including them in this document, along with additional demands to help the university move beyond lip service and into action. These demands are non-negotiable. We do not wish to be brought into endless meetings to help you figure out how to do this work. We expect the short term demands to be started **immediately**, and long term goals to follow directly thereafter.

## **I. ASSOCIATED STUDENTS**

We, as Black Student leaders, support the abolishment of the Associated Students. This organization is beyond reform, as the professional staff care more about the use of Venmo for fundraisers than the safety and wellbeing of Black students. Logistically, we also know that people who hold positions of power within the Associated Students love bureaucracy, and will hide behind the unjust "policies and procedures" to continue harming the Black community, and support an organization that perpetuates more harm than good.

**1. Create a Black Student Space\***. We demand for the immediate halt of all Viking Union construction. We demand that you, Eric Alexander and Greg McBride begin the process of repurposing Viking Union 535-547 to be a space for Black Students to seek comfort in. We demand the space to be refurbished and remodeled to include a study area, a common area, and a meeting room. Considering the current layout of the space, we expect this to be completed and ready for use by the beginning of Winter Quarter 2021.

**2. Abolish the AS Employee Development Fund [ \$5000], the lobbying trip to Washington D.C. [ \$4200] and defund all travel of the AS Executive Board. Invest this money into Black Students.** The AS Employee Development Fund is being used for friends to travel on behalf of "benefitting the Western student body"- but the treatment of Black Students by your AS Employees that go on these trips has proven how useless this fund is. As shown by the 2019-2020 school year, members of the AS Executive Board have been reported to abuse these funding dollars to go on social trips with their friends that work in the AS. *There is no ethical reason why student employees should be spending student dollars to go on vacations.* This money would be better served to support the items outlined in this document related to the wellbeing of Black students on campus.

**3. Immediately create the Black Student Coalition that is led by a council of both Black student leaders and Black staff that are compensated\*\*.** Fund this coalition yearly, with the following budgets.

<b>Budget Allocation</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
Black History Month Funding	<b>\$5000/ year</b>
Black Student Conferences	<b>\$7000/year</b>
Black Student Clubs	<b>\$15,000/year</b>
SIBLINGS + Program***	<b>\$3000/year</b>
MLK Day Funding	<b>\$3000/year</b>
Juneteenth Funding	<b>\$3000/year</b>

## **II. WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

**1. Annual School-wide recognition and celebration of Black History Month, MLK Day, and Juneteenth.** We demand the President, Provost, and VP of Student Services Melynda Huskey work collaboratively to bring known Black speakers and artists to campus annually to celebrate these important holidays.

**2. Defund the Western Washington University Police and invest the money into recruiting and retaining Black Mental Health counselors.** We are familiar with the broad statement issued by Police Chief, Darin Rasmussen, on Western's homepage. This statement does not reflect an understanding of the insidious nature of racism, nor does it speak to the ways in which acts of racial violence play out daily on our campus and in all parts of Whatcom County. Therefore, we demand that the university defund its police force and instead seek to increase counseling support specifically for Black students. Apart from Executive Director, Dr. Sislena Ledbetter, we demand that the university employ two

additional certified Black, mental health counselors who are specifically trained to support students in our efforts to grapple with anti-Black racism. Too often, sole Black counselors and Black faculty are tasked with addressing all of our needs. Racism is too consuming of an issue for this burden to fall on just a few. We demand this nationwide search for additional counselors start immediately, and that the university includes Black students as part of the hiring committee. Additionally, the job description for these critical appointments must be proofread by each Black Student Organization on campus. We expect to have two new Black counselors hired by the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

**3. Re-evaluate each major application campus-wide**, as many of them are built upon a white supremacist view of "merit" and its connection to GPA that never acknowledges the mental, and emotional systemic barriers that Black students face while stepping on this campus and its impact on grades.

**4. Annual "Black Friday" to be hosted before Thanksgiving Break.** All profits from student dollars that are spent in the Bookstore, Zoe's, the Atrium, and all stores on campus goes directly to Black organizations.

**5. Start-up week for Black Students.** Before classes start, create a program that allows Black students to move into their dorms early, receive a Western care package, tour campus with Black tour guides, have educational workshops co-hosted by Black students leaders, a welcome event where new students meet their SIBLINGS+ Pairs.

**6. Rename Huxley College, and rename campus buildings to honor important figures in Black History.** Prioritize the renaming of Huxley college, and naming the two new buildings after historical Black figurines as well as re-evaluating current buildings.

**7. Add Black art pieces, sculptures and famous Black figures in history to line the walls of their respective buildings and departments.** We demand these art pieces and recognition be added to every department by the beginning of Fall 2020.

**8. Mandate anti-Racism and anti-Blackness training for staff, and create an Anti-Discrimination policy that can hold faculty and staff accountable.** We demand this training be mandatory and included in the Collective Bargaining agreement. We demand an Anti-Discrimination policy that specifically outlines what discriminatory behavior looks like, and what the consequences look like when policies are violated.

**9. Mandate anti-Racism and anti-Blackness training for students.** Make this a requirement for all students modeling a similar system that CASAS mandates the sexual assault training.

**10. Compensate the Black student leaders you request to meet with, and provide leadership in any section of the Black Student Coalition to be counted as ISP credits, or a General University Requirement.**

- 11. Develop an African American Studies Major that is taught by Black staff.** We demand this major be comprehensive and implemented within the College of Ethnic Studies.
- 12. Stand by Shred the Contract and end the contract with Aramark.** In its place, establish a Self-Operated dining system. Substitute dining contractors such as Sodexo or Bon Appétit are not acceptable.
- 13. Create a cross-cultural education course within each major, and mandate it as a major course requirement–NOT AN ELECTIVE.** We demand that this be a graduation requirement for all students, and this education must hold competency.
- 14. Diversify the authors used in class curricula.** Update textbooks and course syllabus to include text and material by diverse authors, and authors that honestly address Black history—not white-wash it.
- 15. Review the hiring process of all faculty within the College of Science and Engineering, College of Business and Economics, Psychology, and Anthropology.** Departments cannot vow to honor diversity and Black students if they do not have Black representation in their departments.
- 16. Campus wide reporting system for microaggressions in experiences with faculty and staff that hold merit during tenure and promotion considerations.**
- 17. Better communication with administration and staff that does not only fall on one student.** These communications should not be initiated by students every time, and meetings should not be held at inconvenient times, such as a Friday on dead week at 8 AM.
- 18. Define "reasonable accommodations" for students observing religious holidays.** Mandate at least a 12 hour extension and have accommodations for different times where students who are observing religious holidays can take exams as policy. Have professors who do not follow these policies penalized as breaking the anti-Discrimination code in the collective bargaining agreement.
- 19. Quarterly and yearly benchmarks that address racial equity from all colleges, including the publication of this document on the WWU website, and a tracker that is reported to the Western Front, and AS Review quarterly.** Each department must publicize the work they have done quarterly to address these demands, and have it be public so students can see the institution is actively working towards progression instead of continuing the trend of empty promises.

### **III. OUR PROMISE**

As Black students, we are tired of being tokenized in the Ethnic Student Center, Multi Cultural Center, Associated Students, and throughout Western Washington University. If both the Associate Students and Western Washington University fail to complete their demands within the time period, we will systematically break our ties with the Ethnic Student Center and the Associated Students, and take future steps of retribution, including contacting Black alumni, and university donors.

We are tired of being ignored.

## **IV. SIGNATURES**

Below are the signatures and venmos of the numerous Black students who have suffered through years of trauma at Western and demand better.

Selome Zerai  
venmo: @selzerai

Brandi Smetko

Zarea Lavalais

Jada Rogers  
venmo: jada-rogers-3

Zion Gemechu

Selam Swier

Fatuma Musa

LaShaiah Dickerson

Elizabeth Kelly  
Venmo: lizk1031

Olivia Chatters  
venmo: @livichatt

Abdul Malik Ford

Jade Jordan  
venmo: jadej98

Hannah Okotcha

Chanté Lee

Hunter Eider

Ariana Flournoy

Xaria Siplin

Khadijah Pritchett

Moshope Durojaiye

Myele Johnson

Michael Prostka

Kevauna Reeves

Veronica M. Lopez-Humphries

LaRae Ellison

Tiffany Thomas

Maya Smiley

Ermias Hagos

Freda Nkrumah

Dede Stewart

Cieon White

Megan Lines

Quarazine Orato

Oluchi Anunobi

Winta Berhe

Ashley Lockett

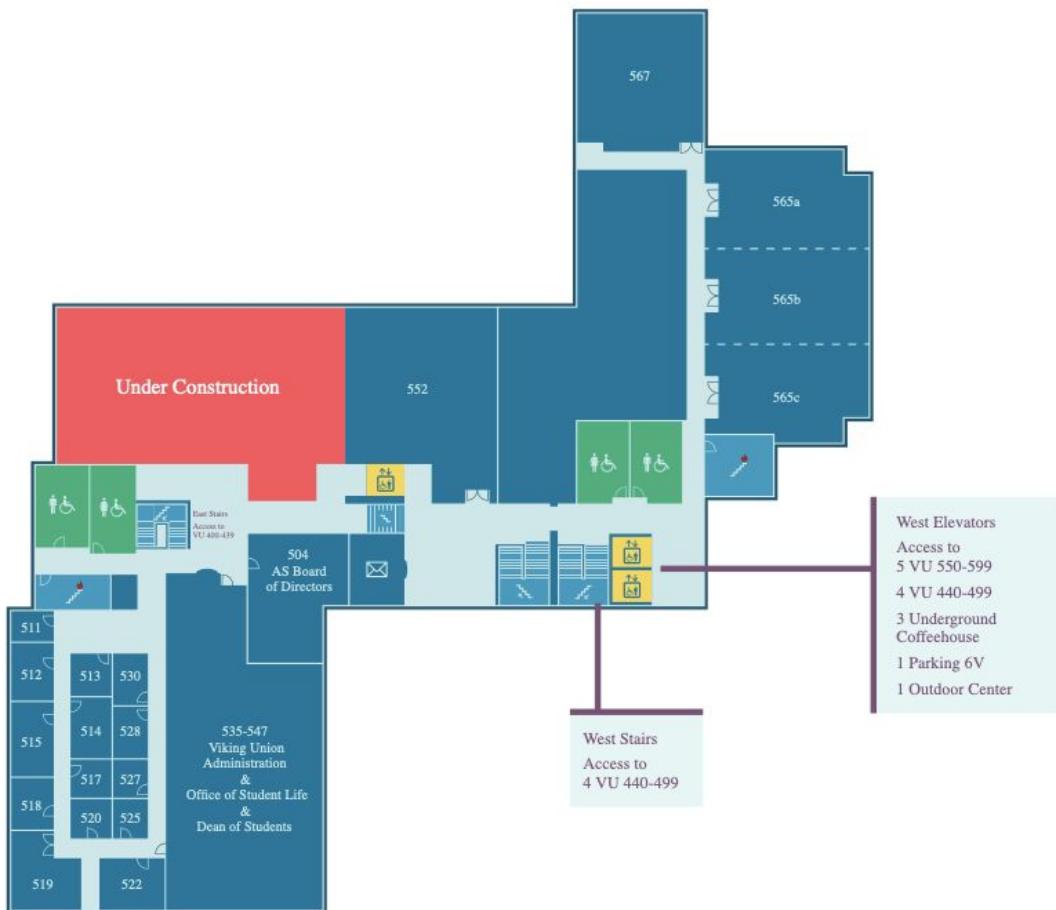
Tendai Dozier

## **V. FOOTNOTES**

\* The footnotes include a review of the 20-21 AS Fiscal Budget, and a map of the new Black student space. Find the footnotes with [this link](#).

***EDIT, 6/24 : We've pasted the footnotes below for ease of access.***

\*Image of the current 5th floor of the Viking Union. Halt the construction of the red area and immediately start construction on VU 535-547 to build the Black student space.



\*\* In response to the expected comment of "budget cuts" at our request to directly receive the money that we pay into this institution, we have found places that we, as students believe the budget should be cut within the Associated Students to fund this coalition. These budget cuts are not required, but considering the history and impact of them, are highly recommended to take steps for the Associated Students to truly be "for students"

BUDGET CODE	NAME	AMOUNT CUT	REASONING
<b>FXXSDV</b>	AS EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT FUND	\$5000 [100%]	Employees have been reported to abuse these funds to go on social trips. Black student dollars should not fund vacations for people that oppress us.
<b>FXXSBR-ASBSCS</b>	Federal Lobbying Trip	\$4200 [100%]	Two executive board members go on this trip to lobby for the President- not the Associated Students

<b>FFXESP</b>	ESC Club Programming Funds	\$4000 [13%]	Two ESC clubs will not be using ESC club funding. Budgeted at \$2000/club
<b>FFXEUN</b>	ESC Building Unity	\$500 [38%]	Has proven to not build unity. at all.
<b>FFXRES</b>	MCC Programming Budget	\$8000 [44%]	MCC programming has not centered Black students, at all. They do not need more money when a whole demographic is leaving this space.
<b>FFXEOR</b>	ESC Retreat	\$3000 [14%]	to go directly into funding the Black student conference
<b>FFXSMR</b>	Summer Concert Series	\$2270 [100%]	COVID-19
<b>FFXSPE</b>	ASP Special Events	\$2000 [29%]	to bring Black speakers during Black history month
<b>FFXLAT</b>	Late Night Program	\$2000 [20%]	to go directly into first week, late night introductory events for SIBLINGS+
<b>FFXSBR-ASB AAX</b>	Student Senate Initiative Fund	\$1000 [50%]	The Associated Students Board has traumatized us for over two years.
<b>FFXBDS</b>	Board Discretionary Fund	\$2000 [100%]	The Associated Students Board has traumatized us for over two years.
<b>FFXELC</b>	AS Election Budget	\$5,500 [70%]	Nothing good has come out of these elections. How do you spend nearly \$8000 on something that is so rigged and problematic?
<b>FFXBAD</b>	Board Assistant Grant Proposal	\$7302 [100%]	The board is unnecessary, same with board assistants.
<b>total</b>		<b>\$48,772</b>	

\*\*SIBLINGS+ is the Black student peer mentoring program created by Black students for new Black students after recognizing the lack of institutional support for incoming Black students. Student mentors and organizers are not compensated for this work, and there is no funding to even host welcoming events.