**Memorandum for Record (9)**

**To:** Anna Walker, President of Student Government, Grant Epstein, VP of Student

Government, Faculty Senators

**From:** Dr. Shery Milz, Dr. Mohamad Samir Hefzy, Dr. Berhane Teclehaimanot, Dr. Deborah

Coulter-Harris

**Date:** 12 April, 2022

**Subject**: Report: Faculty Senate Student Affairs Sub-Committee on Racism and Underserved

Student Communities

1. **Introduction**

This memorandum is written to ease concerns that UT Student Government leaders expressed regarding university “Support for Students from Underserved Student Communities.”

**Student Government’s Concern for Underserved Student Communities**

On 24 September, 2021, Student Government President Anna Walker and Student VP Grant Epstein with their steering committee responded to Memorandum for Record (3), dated 7 September, 2021, from the Faculty Senate Committee for Student Affairs, stating the following:

1. Support of Students from

“Students who come from underserved communities (as a result of race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability religion, and socioeconomic status) have voiced concern that they do not always feel welcome at UToledo. Many feel that they face both unconscious and conscious biases in the classroom, extracurriculars, and other spaces on campus, which impedes their ability to succeed academically and stunts their growth as both a person and a leader. While resources exist across campus to support these students, everyone at UToledo has a responsibility to be actively antiracist and ensure that underserved students are being equitably encouraged to advance in their education. UTSG acknowledges and appreciates Faculty Senate’s Resolution on Racism and Equity, and hopes that Faculty Senate will work with us to continue advocating for underserved students.”

1. **Faculty Senate Committee on Student Affairs’ Sub-Committee Takes Action**

During this school year from December, 2021, through April, 2022, the Faculty Senate Sub-Committee on Student Affairs has emailed, met with, and interviewed many underserved student communities at the University of Toledo; these include the following: Muslim Student Association (MSA); Black Student Union (BSU); SAGA, the LBGTQ+ and transgender communities; Filipino Student Union (FSU); Global Latinx Student Union (GLSU); and, University of Toledo Hillel.

1. **Interview Responses from the Above Stated Underserved Communities**
2. **Muslim Student Association (MSA): (Dr. Hefzy)**

**Interview Date:** 10 December, 2021

**Sub-Committee Members Present**:Dr. Deborah Coulter-Harris, Chair; Dr. Mohammad Samir Hefzy; and Dr. Berhane Teclehamanot.

We posed the following question to the Executive Committee of the Muslim Student Association (MSA): What has been your overall experience at UT? Have any of you run into discrimination, racism, or unconscious/conscious bias from other students, faculty, and administrators?

* The MSA Executive Committee overwhelming stated that they had not experienced any personal bias or racism against them, but other Muslim students might have experienced unconscious or conscious bias against them.
* **The most critical issue for them is that EID, the most important holiday after Ramadan for Muslims, falls on May 2 and 3,** **the very dates of Spring semester, 2022, final exams.** As EID is as important as Christmas is to Christians, they want to be able to take their exams that are scheduled for these dates on an alternative day of exam week. This will require communicating to all faculty regarding this issue to ensure Muslim students are accommodated without prejudice.
* These concerns are being directly addressed by the Provost’s Office. Deborah met on 15 March, 2022, with Senior Vice-Provost Amy Thompson, Cathy Zimmer, and Jewell Mundoe, the Coordinator of Student Advocacy & Support, to apprise her of our Committees’ work on the MSA issue regarding final exams. (Missed Class Policy: 3364-71-14 – A-2). They made good progress on creating a step-by-step process that will accommodate students for religious exemptions; here is the link to the new process: <https://www.utoledo.edu/success/how-to/religious-accommodation.html>
* On 29 March, 2022, Provost Bjorkman sent out the following message to faculty: “**Ramadan Holiday.** As many of you know, the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, in which Muslims fast from shortly before sunrise to sunset (that is approximately 6 am to 8 pm), starts on April 2, and the Muslim festival of Eid al-Fitr (the first of two such annual festivals) falls on May 3, which will be a Tuesday during the exam week. **Please try to be flexible in working with students who observe this holiday. One consideration for example could be that instructors accommodate their Muslim students by offering to give the student’s exam a day or two before or after the day of Eid.”**

1. **Black Student Union (BSU): (Dr. Milz)**

**Interview Date:** March, 18, 2022.

**Sub-Committee Members Present**: Dr. Shery Milz and Dr. Berhane Teclehaimanot.

We asked the same questions**:** What has been your overall experience at UT? Have any of you run into discrimination, racism, or unconscious/conscious bias from other students, faculty, and administrators? Discussion during the meeting included the following:

* A student member of the Black Study Union Executive Board stated that her academic advisor didn’t care to advise her and told her that her selected major was too hard to handle. The advisor questioned whether her proposed major was something that she should do. The advisor always seemed to be in a hurry and kept any meetings with the student short. The student felt dismay and frustration after these meetings.
* There has been a problem with some faculty treating students differently based on the color of their skin. The faculty don’t seem to believe that the black students are smart enough to major in STEM fields and don’t communicate information on these fields. The faculty reach out to non-minority students in their classes and offer support, but this does not happen for the black students.
* The students believe that through the campus the university does not communicate with the black students in general. The university’s communication and outreach are only with white student organizations. The black students are not learning about events being held on campus.
* One student felt that the problem could be due to a lack of training for faculty on diversity especially related to blacks. This was discounted by other students present.
* The students felt that the University of Toledo doesn’t want to address the issue of racism. However, the university gave the students a place to sit but doesn’t take action to address microaggression. It was brought up that the issues are not new so why are changes not being implemented?
* The students have also experienced racism in Student Residence Life. One of the students was an RA and the black RAs were treated differently than the white RAs by hall directors, but this was never passed on to the person in charge of Residence Life (who is black). The university places a black person at the top, but the rest of the employees are white so the issues that occur are not reaching the top person.
* The Student Government should also take responsibility for addressing the racism on campus.
* Some professors are racist, and they disrespect the black students. The students also feel that they don’t belong at the university. They stated that some professors do not care about black people, and they get away with it. Faculty don’t know how to address issues properly. An example was discussed of a Social Work professor who did not realize an issue with groups in a course was race related since the offender was deaf. She assumed the issue was that the students didn’t want to work with a deaf student instead of a deaf student using racist language. There needs to be accountability and consequences for unacceptable behavior.
* If we cannot make changes, what are we doing?
* The people in higher positions need to talk to us and with us and not just when something is needed, such during voting for student government.
* The students believe that the university used them by putting their pictures on the website because they are black. This is dehumanizing and objectifying. The only black presidential scholar was asked to remain after a photo shoot with all presidential scholars for an additional photo shoot. Another instance was the photo of a black male was used for one group, but he was not active in the group even though he was a member, and therefore the picture was an example of tokenism.
* The university needs to promote diversity in a proper way. They should also judge blacks on the same standards they use for whites.
* The university does not support black student organizations at all in comparison with other student organizations. Since black students make up less than 10% of the student population the Black Student Union receives less fund from the university. The Black Student Union is held to the same membership and attendance requirements as other student organizations on campus even though black students make up less the 10% of the student population. The Black Student Union has not received any funds from CAP for their events in four years. Black student organizations are dying due to the lack of support from the university. 4AW is already inactive.
* The Black Student Union has special status for the black community in Toledo. It provides a safe space on campus for the students to be themselves. They feel that they are limited in what they can say outside of the safe space.
* The Black Student Union was told that there was a tool that would allow them to reach all black students at the university, but the tool itself was incomplete. It had the names of maybe 100 black students.
* The university never surveys the black students to ask how they are doing at the University of Toledo.
* There was a problem with a faculty member when a student informed him that her grandfather had passed, and she needed to miss some class time. Instead of working with her the professor told her to drop the class.
* Black students don’t receive invitations for entrepreneur-related issues at the university.
* The university does not value the black students.
* Many events held at the university are not for black students. Additionally, events sponsored by black organizations are rarely publicized by the university. A white sorority was hosting a philanthropic even that was announced in an email, but during the same week two philanthropic events hosted by black sororities occurred with no email announcement. All student organizations need to be treated the same and all their events need to be advertised the same.
* The students want to feel that they are heard. They also should not be the only ones fighting for change. The faculty should also be in the fight.

1. **SAGA, the LBGTQ+ and Transgender Communities: (Dr. Coulter-Harris)**

**Interview Date:** 14 March, 2022,

**Sub-Committee Member:** Dr. Deborah Coulter-Harris.

Questions posed: What has been your overall experience at UT? Have any of you run into discrimination, racism, or unconscious/conscious bias from other students, faculty, and administrators?

1. There has been a problem with some faculty talking out of favor and not using chosen pronouns and chosen names in class. Our transgendered students especially have felt excluded and mis-gendered. We did discuss how the new gender policy, entitled “Inclusive Gender Practices,” Policy Number 3364-12-03, would be helpful in clarifying this issue and other issues related to the LGBTQ+ community.

2. There has been a problem with some STEM majors and some faculty consistently mis-gendering transgendered students after they were informed not to mislabel them. They praised the College of Arts and Letters for being the best to accommodate all members of the LBGTQ+ community.

3. There is a problem with the number of transgendered (neutral) bathrooms, particularly in the Student Union.

4. IT has not been cooperative regarding getting a new Rocket Card with a student’s preferred name.

5. They were upset that a law professor who wrote about anti-sodomy was given the Diversity award.

6. They stated that UT is not horrible but it needs to show how truly diverse we are.

7. They noted a psych professor who asked a student—Are you male or female?

8. The year 2020 was the very first year the LGBTQ+ and transgendered community could be nominated for Homecoming Court and the first time they could be included in the Homecoming Parade and Songfest. (**My note: I found this to be discriminatory and appalling!)**

9. Sororities do not let in trans-women but they do let in trans-men. There are no gay fraternities or sororities on campus.

10. Fraternities do not allow gay women into their events, but will let in gay men because they bring in straight women. Some fraternity members use gay slurs. Kirsten and Liam said “Greek life is god-awful.”

11. They invited us to attend their celebration on April 29 on Centennial Mall from 3 to 7 pm.

12. This email was sent to me on 3 April, 2022:

“Good afternoon Deb,

I hope you are well! I have been made aware of something upsetting this weekend that I wanted to pass along in case it was of relevance to your committee or just anything anyone could do. I let the LGBTQ initiatives advisor in OMSS know as well. Over the weekend in the gender inclusive hall of presidents, pride flags were ripped down and torn. This has upset a lot of the students on the floor but just queer students in general. I've attached the pictures I was sent. This is unfortunate but I figured I'd pass it along as another example! Thanks so much, I hope you have a good week!”

1. **Filipino Student Union FSU).** (Dr. Coulter-Harris)

**Interview Date:** 24 March, 2022.

**Sub-Committee Member:** Dr. Deborah Coulter-Harris.

Questions posed: What has been your overall experience at UT? Have any of you run into discrimination, racism, or unconscious/conscious bias from other students, faculty, and administrators?

“I spoke to some of the members of the Filipino American association about the Filipino-American experience at UToledo. We largely agreed that most of our experiences on a personal level have been positive! However, one area in which we feel unconscious bias is at the organizational level. As a university, UToledo values and cares for all of its student organizations. However, we feel like some organizations (i.e. fraternities/sororities) get more attention and sometimes even preferential treatment. For example,

* We struggle to book rooms in the student union on a consistent basis for our performance practices. When attempting to book rooms for these practices, we were told that none were available. However, upon further investigation, these rooms were unoccupied during many of our rehearsal times. When confronting faculty with this issue, it seemed like they were dismissive of this thought. They voiced that our room submissions were too late. We felt unheard.

* Additionally, for the past 11+ years we have performed our dances barefooted. Not only is this the traditional way that these dances are performed, they are often the safest as well. At one of our rehearsals, we were told by staff that we could not perform with bare feet anymore. The building manager told us that bare feet were not allowed in the union, and that we must find somewhere off campus to rehearse.
  + We felt targeted as a group as we have seen other cultural organizations practice and perform with bare feet. We had to involve our advisor in the situation, and the dispute seemed as if it may lead to the end of our traditional Filipino dance performances. We were able to come to a solution, but the way that it was pursued by faculty seemed highly unfair and biased.”

1. **Global Latinx Student Union (GLSU) (**formerly the Latino Student Union (LSU**):** **(Dr. Milz)**

**Interview Date: 1 April, 2022**

**Sub-Committee Member:** Dr. Shery Milz

We asked the same questions**:** What has been your overall experience at UT? Have any of you run into discrimination, racism, or unconscious/conscious bias from other students, faculty, and administrators? Discussion during the meeting included the following:

* SAHLSA and LSU merged to create GLSU
* There are not many minorities at UT – the university is mostly white
* There is a limited presence of Hispanic students in STEM area
  + Hispanic students often don’t see themselves as being able to succeed in STEM areas
* There is a loss of community
  + This may be part of the reason for lower retention
* GLSU is trying to get more Hispanics to their events
  + Students aren’t learning about events
  + It’s hard to know what students want from GLSU if they don’t attend events

1. **University of Toledo Hillel: (Dr. Milz)**
2. **Interview Date: 13 April, 2022**
3. **Sub-Committee Member:** Dr. Shery Milz

(Interview will be sent as a forthcoming addendum to UTSG and to Faculty Senate.)

Cc: Members of Faculty Senate, Terry Bigioni, Gary Insch, Deborah Coulter-Harris, Mohamed Samir Hefzy, Shery Milz, Berhane Tecleaimanot, Sally Harmych, Carolyn Lee, Sarah Aldrich, Lucy Duhon, Karen Green

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Committee Sponsor(s): Faculty Senate on Student Affairs

Speaker of the Senate,

Colleen Palmer

President,

Anna Walker

Date Adopted\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date Vetoed\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_