Black Student Union and Student Solidarity Network Student Demands

2020
Contents

Preface and Mission Statement 2

1. First and Foremost 3

2. Restructuring the Hiring Process 4

3. Required Comprehensive Diversity Education and Implicit Bias Training 5
   for the Board of Trustees, Administration, Faculty, Staff and Students.

4. Creation of Official Body Dedicated to Social Equity and Inclusion 6

5. Acknowledgement and Payment for BIPOC Labor as Work Study 7

6. Zero Tolerance Policy 8

7. Expanding the Curriculum 9

8. Departmental Restructuring and Reform 10

9. Tuition Support and Reform 11

10. Health Services 12

11. Long-Term Promise to Work Towards Decolonization 13

12. Long-Term Promise to Work Towards Sustainability 14

13. Truly Accessible and Affordable Campus 15

14. Compensation for Administrative Neglect 16

An Open Letter 17

Contributions 18
Preface

The Kansas City Art Institute was founded and continues to be complicit in the perpetuation of systematic racism, anti-black and colonial systems. By not taking systemic action and reforming the institution, they are a part of the violent American legacy that continues to harm and erase Black, Indigenous, POC, Queer and Disabled folk in our communities.

We are joining the larger student-led movement of art institutions around the country calling for systemic change and reform. These demands touch on the dismissed violence and erasure that KCAI students have been experiencing for decades. These demands must be understood in relation to global systems of oppression on Black, Indigenous, POC, Queer, Disabled and other marginalized groups that seep into the educational spaces we occupy.

... 

Mission Statement

The Student Solidarity Network seeks to create a diverse, inclusive, supportive, humanizing, collective and equitable culture at KCAI. We demand a campus culture of collaboration, accountability, and transparency across all facets of KCAI’s community (inclusive of students, alumni, faculty, staff, administration and the board of trustees) in which all members feel visible and supported. Together we strive to foster an environment that empowers each other, Kansas City, and the larger Global fight to make the world we imagine.
1.

1. First and Foremost

We demand the right for students, staff and faculty to organize without retaliation.
2. Restructuring the Hiring Process

We demand the school hire and retain a minimum of 25% Indigenous, Black, Brown faculty into tenure-track positions immediately.

We demand the school acknowledge the importance of Queer faculty and work towards making the campus environment safer for our BIPOC and Queer community.

We demand that KCAI hire Black or Brown psychologists or counselors with knowledge and understanding of the mental health needs of underserved populations.

We demand adequate academic and career support services to better meet student needs. The current all white academic advising department has not been able to truly support students. We demand that the school hire an additional academic and career support staff of BIPOC descent.
3. Required Comprehensive Diversity Education and Implicit Bias Training for the Board of Trustees, Administration, Faculty, Staff and Students.

We demand that all KCAI administration, faculty, board and staff must have mandatory education on cultural humility, implicit bias and accountability bi-annually, as well as before going on a search committee.

We demand that KCAI work in collaboration with students on core goals of the institution so that they may refer to them in Title VI, Title IX and other campus incidents.

We demand that students be educated on their Title VI and Title IX rights during orientation and their rights be included in all syllabi.
4. Creation of Official Body Dedicated to Social Equity and Inclusion

We demand the formation of an official body dedicated to diversity, social equity, access and inclusion. If IDEAS is this body, we demand the faculty leading the group be compensated for their labor by giving them a 2% raise.

We demand KCAI hire BIPOC students for IDEA as work study positions.

We demand that a group of faculty and Alumni are required to audit proposed courses, who is chosen by the IDEAS committee and a qualified faculty member educated on the subject.

We demand that the school implement transformative justice practices into residential life, academic and career advising and support, student affairs, and Title VI, Title IX and conflict resolution procedures.

We demand the school make sure international students are protected from ICE and won’t be deported if the school switches to online-only courses. This means by any means necessary.
5.

5. Acknowledgement and Payment for BIPOC Labor as Work Study

We demand the school put in place a student government with representatives from each department who are able to voice the concerns of the student body. Representatives should be compensated with either course credit or work study funds.

We demand compensation for students who promote campus engagement and the implicit effort to not tokenize queer students and BIPOC students for engagement, publicity, and branding.
6. Zero Tolerance Policy

We demand a Zero Tolerance Policy for anti-Black, racist, xenophobic, transphobic, homophobic, sexist, sexual assault, harassment, and ableist behavior be implemented, effective immediately.
7. Expanding the Curriculum

We demand an abolition of prerequisites Art History and History of Thought I & II.

We demand that you replace the courses with expanded Art History and Liberal Art courses to include global studies.

We demand that truly qualified professors teach these expanded courses with both

We demand that anti-racist studies be included into the curriculum as a priority and that faculty be required to participate in anti-racist workshops bi-annually. White supremacy is embedded into the very foundation of this institution and the current curriculum, it is KCAI’s duty to dismantle it.

We demand that 50% of the visiting artists for Current Perspectives, department studio visits, critiques, and demonstrations are BIPOC.
8.

8. Departmental Restructuring and Reform

We demand that KCAI restructure and update the Foundation's curriculum and structure immediately.

We demand that BIPOC and queer faculty be hired in foundations immediately, and all current faculty go through intensive sensitivity training regarding the Zero-Tolerance Policy.

We demand that KCAI treat each department equitably - ensure that departments are well-staffed and that students have access to conversations about departmental needs with administration. What happened to Interactive Arts should never happen again.
9.

9. Tuition Support and Reform

We demand that the school begin moving away from the tuition driven model immediately as a way to begin systemic reform.

We demand that the Board of Trustees address the underlying economics of the school, the fact that tuition is run on the students dime. This furthers KCAI in the entrenchment of colonialism’s status quo. We demand that the Board of Trustees begin by exploring alternative funding sources and becoming a more diverse body that is understanding of students’ needs.

We demand that as incremental reform leading up to the abolition of the tuition driven model, KCAI increases accessibility for all students by reconstructing its annually inflating financial model through a tuition reduction of 20%.

As another form of incremental reform, we demand that KCAI creates a merit scholarship and stipend for BIPOC students to receive per year, per upper-level department within their tuition package.
10.

10. Health Services

We demand adequate free on-campus health services or extremely accessible off-campus services that are both affordable and extremely close to campus.

We demand the school provide affordable and accessible health care packages and take the initiative to provide multiple opportunities to inform and educate students on how to utilize this resource.

We demand a healthy, clean quality of food.
11. Long-Term Promise to Work Towards Decolonization

We demand not only land acknowledgements to Indigenous Peoples whose ancestral land we’re on, both orally and visually throughout the KCAI campus, curriculum and communications, but also land reparations.

We demand that KCAI create a free tuition incentive to incoming students whose ancestors were displaced from the land KCAI is built on.

We demand that KCAI build partnerships and solidarity with the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kansa, Kiowa, Kaw, Osage, Pawnee, and Wichita nations, as well as the greater Kansas City community.

We demand the divestment of KCAI from blood money: fossil fuels, extractive industry, private prisons, etc.
12. Long-Term Promise to Work Towards Sustainability

We demand the school work towards becoming a truly sustainable institution.

We demand that a system be put in place to limit water use and municipal solid waste in studios and across campus through both curriculum implementation and a designated sustainability task force.

We demand that dumpsters be downsized to limit and prevent large quantities of waste.

We demand that KCAI prioritize native plants when spending money on landscaping and severely cut down on irrigation practices.
13. Truly Accessible and Affordable Campus

We demand that parking be affordable & accessible.

We demand all buildings on campus be truly accessible, not just Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.
14.

Compensation for Administrative Neglect

We demand that the dorm residents of Fall 2019 are truly consulted and compensated for the inhumane conditions endured during the campus’s growth.
An Open Letter

4 July 2020

To Tony Jones, Bambi Burgard, KCAI Board of Trustees and Administration et al,

We recognize the gestures made by KCAI in the form of protest care packages and the various distanced and insensitive emails and posts responding to state and community violence. However, this is not enough. Our demands hold KCAI accountable for the violence it has continually allowed to take place on campus in both the upheld Eurocentric curriculum and in the studio and classroom. Efforts towards social equity, and inclusion cannot be solely the responsibility of unpaid and overworked students, your tokenized faculty members or IDEA, but should be ingrained in the core of the institution. This means every department, administrative decision, faculty hiring process and course curriculum needs to acknowledge and work to combat racial-bias and the systemic injustices that are violently oppressing Black, Brown, Indigenous, and all people of color. Do sit with and reflect upon what’s being said by your students and the collective movement of the people. We have provided you with tangible resources to move forward. Materialize these demands into action—start working to implement our List of Demands immediately.

We expect the following KCAI academic leadership divisions, including but not limited to, the Office of The President, Board of Trustees, Deans, and Department Heads to respond with formal written statements and a timeline detailing the application of our demands in order to restructure old systems. These must facilitate long-term sustainable change that earnestly addresses and further supports our Black, Indigenous, and POC students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

The public announcement must be publicly released by August 15, 2020, at 11:59pm.

Racial, academic, and social equity and inclusion are essential to catalyzing true institutional change. This document is just the beginning.

Respectfully,

The Student Solidarity Network

and

Black Student Union
Contributions

Writers:
Student Solidarity Network
Black Student Union
RISD Anti-Racist Coalition (risdARC)

Editors:
Jada Patterson

Designers:
Juan-Carlos Franco

Organizers:
Izsys Archer
Darrin Arnold
Erin Conyers
Nick de Krafft
Cullen Curtis
Jada Patterson
London Williams

Special Thanks To:
Front Space
Oddities Prints
Erin Unkefer
Our comrades in art schools around the country, with extra gratitude to the organizing and role models at RISD whose language we’ve heavily leaned on, Art Center and MICA whose mentorship helped us to keep fighting and other unnamed folk who helped make this happen.