



University System of Maryland
Student Council

University System of Maryland
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Aiden Galloway
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Mark O'Halloran
Deputy Director of Governmental Affairs

Samantha Figueroa
Director of Student Affairs

December 11th, 2015

RE: Monthly Report to James L. Shea, J.D.

Chairman, University System of Maryland Board of Regents

On Sunday, December 6th, 2015, at the University of Maryland of Baltimore Campus, the USM Student Council met for their last meeting of the semester. We were joined by Jo Boughman, Ph.D., USM Sr. Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Artie Lee Travis, Ph.D., Vice President for Student Affairs, Bowie State University.

In the wake of recent events that have taken place our meeting was dedicated to taking a pulse of the climate on each campus.

Included below is a summary of the discussion points that were discussed by the council.

- I. A lack of diversity among university faculty
- II. A lack of diversity among university law enforcement
- III. Racial biased event programming (not holding "black events," such as club-style dances or step shows, as often or as willingly as "white student events")
- IV. The absence of academic curriculum addressing cultural competency and race issues
- V. The absence of academic curriculum that showcases the artistic, historic, and literary work of African-Americans
- VI. Inconsistent institutional policies and responses to reporting and investigating hate speech on campus
- VII. A biased level of university support in favor of Greek (predominately white) organizations, and higher levels of scrutiny placed on African-American student organizations
- VIII. The USM partnership with Maryland Correctional Enterprises was brought up by "Occupy Towson" protesters who felt the program may be unfairly exploiting inmates, many of whom are African-Americans.*

As shown above there is much work to be done to address the issues that are taking place on campuses throughout the system. The USMSC is committed to working on recommendations to give to both Dr. Caret and the Board of Regents.

Respectfully submitted,

Gayon M. Sampson

President



November 24, 2015

Dear fellow students:

On Friday, I received a letter from Dr. Timothy Chandler, Interim President of Towson University. This letter called on the University System of Maryland Student Council to review one of the requests presented by the #OccupyTowson movement on November 18.

Specifically, I was asked to review request 4 regarding the contract-and-vendor relationship between the University System of Maryland, its institutions, and Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE).

In the brief amount of time since receiving this request, the council's executive board has conducted preliminary research and discussed this issue at length. Based upon these initial efforts, it is our inclination not to advocate for the termination of the existing contracts between our institutions and MCE at this time.

At this stage, we do not have enough evidence to justify taking a position against USM contracts with MCE. While we understand that the #OccupyTowson movement desires the ending of this program, we feel we must thoroughly investigate all aspects surrounding this complex matter. Without a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of this relationship, including how it affects prisoners participating in the program and the role this program plays in USM institutions' acquisitions, we believe it would be rash and ill-advised to advocate for the termination of contracts with MCE.

Although no immediate action will be taken, I have directed the council's Directors of Diversity and Inclusion and Governmental Affairs to create and lead a taskforce that will further investigate this issue and its relationship to the twelve institutions that we represent. This taskforce will be comprised of student government presidents from each of our 12 institutions. The taskforce will ultimately submit a final report to me no later than March 1, 2016, which will be disseminated publicly.

I can assure you all that the USMSC is wholeheartedly committed to addressing issues of diversity and inclusion within our system. In an effort to properly address these issues, we established a Diversity and Inclusion cabinet position in July of this year. Our Diversity and Inclusion team has and will continue to be invested in the creation and support of initiatives in the area of diversity.

Within the next couple of weeks, we will be launching the #KnowYourRights campaign, an initiative designed to raise students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities on- and off-campus. Specifically, we'll be making each institution's codes of conduct and grievance policies easier to understand for students. This initiative stemmed from the recent nationwide events pertaining to sexual assault on campuses, protests concerning police brutality, and showings of racial insensitivity.

We take issues of diversity and inclusion very seriously and intend to continue to engage with students, faculty, and staff to promote initiatives regarding cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence.

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