



Auburn Students & Community for Change Demands for Racial Equity at Auburn University

Developed Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, Released Spring 2021



To President Gogue, Lt. Gen. Burgess, and Provost Hardgrave:

We recognize your tactics, your willful ignorance, and your failures. We have organized as a group of students—many of us involved in other on-campus and off-campus organizations—with anti-discrimination and care for our communities at the forefront of our minds. We have sat in meetings with administrators including Provost Hardgrave, Lt. Gen. Burgess, and President Gogue, honestly shared our experiences, and offered solutions backed up by research. We have voiced our pain and concern when experiencing discrimination, dismissal, and disrespect. We have amplified calls for transparency and respect. And we have watched our peers (including alumni) do the same for years and years. Many of us have even done all of this while also experiencing racism, sexism, misogynoir, xenophobia, and homophobia within the various Auburn organizations we have joined in an attempt to feel a part of the ever-elusive “Auburn family” you so deceptively promote. Enough has been enough for far too long.

As we start to approach nearly a year since students first began having the conversations which resulted in the founding of our organization, we leave you these demands. We make these demands with the understanding that Auburn University has exemplified and will continue to exemplify white supremacy in its tactics for stalling, exploiting, and abusing its Black and POC students, staff, faculty, and alumni. We have heard your excuses: refusing to offer transparency lest the public hear your harmful words; refusing to listen to Black students because you disbelieve their personal experiences; refusing to create an inclusive culture of justice and anti-racism because ‘it would take too long.’ We know it all too well, and we are unsurprised and unfazed.

Our work is not for you. Rather, all of it—our organizing since May 2020 as well as all the demands within this document - is for future Black and POC students who find themselves on this campus without a home, and without any administrators who will listen to their pain and utilize their power to heal it. May they avoid being exploited by the allure of your diversity initiatives, and being given false hope in your “Listening Groups” and “Task Forces.” Instead, may they carry on our documented work, and continue to resist your white supremacist tactics at every turn.

With the unwavering power of our collective voice,
The Black students of Auburn Students & Community for Change

We are a group of students and community members from the Auburn / Lee County area against all forms of injustice in our local community and beyond. We originally came together to organize and execute our Protest for Black Lives in the summer of 2020, inspired by other nationwide protests and angered by the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and more. Since, we have been organizing to educate our community about racial injustice, and to hold Auburn University administrators accountable to creating a more just, inclusive campus . As an organization, we are not affiliated with Auburn University. Find more information at our website, auburn4change.wordpress.com.



Acknowledgements

Special thanks to all of our mentors, advisers, and organizers who worked with us to produce these demands. These include the Black Auburn University students, faculty, staff, and alumni who shared their experiences and expertise with us through our Black Coalition Listening Sessions. They will remain anonymous for their protection.

Special thanks and recognition to all past, present, and future members of the Auburn community who have led the tireless work of advocating for equity and justice on our campus and in our community. We would especially like to recognize the Black students, faculty, staff, and alumni who have contributed to this work.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge that Auburn University sits on land originally inhabited by people of the Muscogee / Creek nation. No justice work should be carried out without an acknowledgment of Auburn's history, and a commitment to eliminating the harms of this institution's past and present.

Overview of Demands

The demands herein were developed over the course of several months thanks to the close council of a number of Auburn University undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni. They are organized into four categories:

- ◆ Monetary Commitments (pg. 4)
- ◆ Campus Culture (pg. 6)
- ◆ Education & Training (pg. 8)
- ◆ Structural Changes (pg. 10)

We see these as four broad areas over which Auburn administrators, if they so decided, could advocate for transformative racial equity. We recognize that many of these demands have been put forth before by groups and individuals predating our own, and that, due to the nature of the white supremacist machine that is Auburn University, many will be put forth after us.

Monetary Commitments

Allotting and demonstrating tangible funds to support BIPOC Auburn students

1

Establish a Center Dedicated to Black Student Advocacy

Targets: Provost Hardgrave, Dr. Clayton

Proposed Deadline: Published plan by Fall 2021

Through multiple forums including protest, President Gogue's listening sessions, Auburn Student Involvement's 2019 "Breaking Barriers" event, and the Task Force for Opportunity & Equity, students have expressed that they feel a lack of specific support for Black students on Auburn's campus.

Furthermore, existing offices meant to serve minority students do not necessarily advocate for the issues of Black students, and have historically been cut in funding. This is evidenced by the 2018-19 consolidated Auburn University budget, wherein expenses for the Cross Cultural Center for Excellence decreased 68% between 2017 and 2018.

As a first step to remedying the historical lack of support for Black students, we demand that Auburn University maintain dedicated, sustainable, and plentiful monetary support for a center dedicated to Black Student Advocacy. Functions of this center would include:

- ◆ Developing staff and students who are paid to be well-versed in equity, justice, and anti-racism
- ◆ Organizing Black students to amplify their voices and give them paid staff advocates
- ◆ Educating Auburn's campus on anti-racism and reconciliation of racism through programming

This initial pool of allotted money should be enough to fund staff salary, activity costs, marketing, student support services, and physical location needs. Furthermore, no one administrator or department should have the ability to cut funding to the center, or to cut the center entirely, in the future.

Examples: [Black Student Center at California State University San Marcos](#); [African American Cultural Center at University of Arizona](#); [African American Student Center at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona](#); [Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center at Vanderbilt University](#)

Backup: If there is hesitation or failure to realize this initial demand, we instead request that funding be raised for the Cross Cultural Center for Excellence (CCCE), and that Auburn administrators demonstrate to the public that this funding will be sufficient enough to enable the CCCE to carry out the aforementioned functions of the proposed center for Black Student Advocacy.

2

Increase Tuition Scholarship Options for Black & POC Students

Targets: University Scholarships

Proposed Deadline: New scholarships available Spring 2022

We recognize that the Presidential Task Force for Opportunity & Equity has started with a recommendation for 10% of scholarship money going to need-based individuals. However, to begin to reconcile with the university's racist history and the multiple factors of systemic racism which have prevented Black students from access to an education at Auburn, more monetary commitment is needed from Auburn University as an institution.

Instead of an additional increase in need-based scholarships, we demand that Auburn University begin a campaign to actively solicit tuition scholarships from the Alumni Association to specifically go towards POC students, especially Black and Indigenous students. Through this campaign, Auburn University should specifically seek out sources of funding for scholarships for BIPOC students, and aim to increase the amount of scholarships in this category yearly by 10%, such that more BIPOC students will be encouraged and enabled to attend this institution of higher learning each year.

3

Encourage Faculty Research Which Considers Racial Issues

Targets: Provost Hardgrave

Proposed Deadline: Published plan by Fall 2021

Student experiences expressed during President Gogue's Fall 2020 Listening Sessions, at Auburn Student Involvement's 2019 "Breaking Barriers" event, and via submission to the @BlackAtAuburn Instagram page have indicated that Black & POC students have felt hurt and unwelcome by faculty members who have acted in racially insensitive or racist ways. As a leading research university, Auburn is no doubt complicit in perpetuating racism across its research by not explicitly considering race and racism in work conducted by such faculty members.

As one part of a solution to this problem, we demand that all faculty be required to consider how their research and work affects racial equity for the community (being Auburn, Lee County, Alabama, the southeast, etc.). Furthermore, we demand that Auburn establish a yearly funding pool which would encourage and fund the ongoing and future work of its faculty members already operating in the areas of race and anti-racism research.

Overall, this should increase the incentive, both financially and structurally, for tenured and non-tenured faculty to engage in research, classroom curriculum, and community engagement projects that address anti-racist elements of experience.

Example: [Rice University](#)

Campus Culture

Replacing Auburn's culture of complacency with one of justice and anti-racism

1

Perform and Release a New Climate Study

Targets: Provost Hardgrave, College Deans

Proposed Deadline: Conducted Fall 2021

We find that Auburn University's 2016 Climate Study, though important and presumably well-intentioned, did not do a complete job at assessing the safety and well-being of Auburn University's minority students, particularly its Black & POC students. We demand that Auburn University conduct a new climate study which captures participants' attitudes towards fairness, equity, and their own experiences at Auburn University on a number of categories including Demographics, Climate, Inclusive & Equitable Treatment, Ingroup Interactions, and Discrimination. We also demand that Auburn release information on the number of people who participated and their roles at the university (undergraduate student, graduate student, staff, faculty, etc.).

We recognize that Dr. Jeffrey Fergus and the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering have been using a Climate Survey based on that developed at the University of Michigan. We support and are grateful for this work being done within the College of Engineering, and demand that similar initiative be taken on an administrative level such that it can become the norm throughout all colleges.

Example: [2016 University of Michigan Student Campus Climate Survey](#)

Backup: If there is any failure to respond to this initial demand at an institutional level, we instead demand that departments and colleges invested in racial equity begin conducting their own Climate Surveys. Please see the College of Engineering's most recent [climate survey](#) sent out on February 17, 2021 (link may expire).

2

Begin Organizational Health Index Reporting

Targets: Provost Hardgrave, Dr. Clayton

Proposed Deadline: Begin Spring 2022

Though individual departments and offices do independent reporting on their diversity & inclusion gains, there is no centralized, mandatory reporting which tracks and conveys Auburn University's institutional progress for racial equity and justice. This can and should be addressed through Organizational Health Index reporting, a tool by which Auburn University would make monthly reports on the University's equity gains, reconciliation efforts, current learning, and more. Reports should have information including:

- ◆ What racial equity initiatives is the University currently working on?
- ◆ What complaints, questions, or suggestions have been gathered from students, faculty, and staff?
- ◆ What are Auburn administrators currently doing to educate themselves on racial equity?

Example: [Bowling Green State University Fall 2020-Spring 2021 Progress Report](#)

Backup: If there is any failure to respond to this initial demand at an institutional level, we instead demand that departments and colleges invested in racial equity begin Organizational Health Index reporting.

3

Create Requirements for Racial Equity Decision Makers

Targets: President Gogue, Provost Hardgrave

Proposed Deadline: Published plan by Fall 2021

The Presidential Task Force for Opportunity & Equity has exhibited a number of harmful practices since its beginning, including an exclusive selection process, a refusal to include the larger community, a failure to initially involve Black non-Greek undergraduate students, a failure to involve sufficient Black tenured faculty, and a failure to uphold the experiences shared by Black students who served on the Task Force. As we know, these infractions ultimately led to multiple student members [leaving the Task Force](#), citing disrespect and flawed communication from Task Force leadership.

We know that similar Task Forces have been used in the past, and uphold that no similar Task Force should be created in the future, since such bodies exist only to quell student complaints without creating actual change. However, to ensure that those making decisions about racial equity share common education and values on respectfully and transparently engaging with race and racism, we demand that all racial equity decision makers (including current and future Task Force members, long-standing staff members, etc.) be subject to a required reading list before serving. The following are a few readings we suggest:

- ◆ *How to Be An Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- ◆ *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander
- ◆ *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks
- ◆ Chapters 1-5 and 12 of *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* edited by Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, Diane J. Goodman, and Khyati Y. Josh
- ◆ *APCA's Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization*
- ◆ Kimberlee Crenshaw's work on Intersectionality
- ◆ "The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture" from *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups* by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun

Regardless of what work or collection of works is chosen as the required reading for racial equity decision makers, we demand that Auburn University administrators make this requirement clearly known to the public, and demonstrate through research that the required reading will promote commonly held values of respectfully engaging with race and racism while upholding the experiences of Black students.

Education & Training

Educating members of our community on race and anti-racism

1

Require Political Education & Assessment for Administrators & Deans

Targets: Board of Trustees, Provost Hardgrave Proposed Deadline: Begin assessment Spring 2022

We recognize that “Administrators at the level of Dean and Department Head or Chair undergo a mandatory review every three to five years as detailed in these guidelines.” However, we feel that Auburn University’s three to five year assessments of Deans is not conducive to the constantly changing political climate on Auburn’s campus.

If a student were to attend Auburn University in the Fall of 2021, the dean and or current administrator would have just received an evaluation or will receive an evaluation that may exclude the first year students’ experiences. The three to five year gap is an issue because, at the time of the next assessment, the same students will have graduated, robbing the students and the university of the opportunity to improve and address the political issues experienced. Dean and administrator evaluations should be conducted on an annual basis due to the ever-changing nature of the political climate.

Backup: If there is any failure to meet this initial demand, we instead request that political education training and evaluations be conducted biannually at the beginning of the Fall semester and at the conclusion of the Spring semester. *Please refer to Campus Culture Demand #3 for some political education resources.*

2

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Training for Faculty & Staff

Targets: Board of Trustees, Provost Hardgrave Proposed Deadline: Begin training Fall 2022

Any faculty or staff member working directly with students should have a base level understanding of how diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice play a role in the student experiences. The university should not continue to employ faculty and staff who are not equipped to actively combat issues of injustice and inequity. Faculty and staff training should be delivered by an unbiased, unaffiliated expert who will educate and broaden trainees’ current beliefs. This training should be required for faculty and staff working directly with students in any environment. We demand that the outcome of this training aid faculty and staff to define specific goals for their classroom instruction and interactions with fellow colleagues.

The intent of this demand is that administrators do the outsourcing and research required to identify an effective training. The outcome of this demand should not solely tax racial minorities with the responsibility of anti-racism work.

3

Implement Required Cultural Competency Course(s)

Targets: Board of Trustees, Provost Hardgrave Proposed Deadline: Implemented by Fall 2026

According to Auburn’s Core Curriculum and General Education Outcomes bulletin, “the purpose of the Auburn University Core Curriculum is to foster the knowledge, skills, and perspectives that are hallmarks of an Auburn graduate.”

At time of writing, Auburn University does not have a required cultural competency course in its core curriculum, meaning that students can graduate without having ever had discussions about race, gender, class, socioeconomic status, or the ways in which these identities interact and affect us.

While there are class options such as “Current Issues in Race and Ethnicity,” “Sociology: Global Perspective,” “Introduction to Africana Studies,” “Introduction to Anthropology,” and “Living and Communicating in a Diverse Society ,” these do not guarantee that any students will choose these particular courses. Due to the repeated bigotry and oppression that only certain Auburn students, faculty, and staff face on a day to day basis, such a required course is needed.

Any student attending Auburn University should have a base level understanding of how diversity, inclusion, and equity will influence how they navigate through their Auburn experience. The university should require incoming students to complete a cultural competency course by the end of their first semester at Auburn. Course training should reflect the experiences of marginalized groups, and this may include Indigenous, Chicax and Latine people, Asian-Pacific Islanders, and African Americans.

Examples: [University of Alabama Birmingham](#), [California State University](#)

Structural Changes

Changing offices, departments, and processes

1

Equitably Fund All DE&I Programs Across All Campus Units

Targets: Board of Trustees, Provost Hardgrave

Proposed Deadline: Allocated for next fiscal year

When OID was introduced, multiple Black programs and organizations were defunded, such as BGPSA and the Juan Gilbert Lecture Series. BGPSA's funding was reduced from \$20,000 to \$3,000, an 85% decrease. Recommendation #3 from the 2015 Climate Survey states that "All Colleges, Schools, and support units should identify and implement comprehensive academic and professional development opportunities designed to emphasize the value of equity, inclusion, and diversity for all students, faculty and staff." Without sufficient and equitable funding, existing programs are not able to accomplish this requirement.

Without funding, new programs, initiatives, and committees are not able to be introduced. At time of writing, on the Presidential Task Force for Opportunity and Equity's DEI Resources page, the following colleges and schools are not represented. While these colleges may have student-led organizations committed to DE&I, their absence on the Task Force's resource page indicates a need for more pervasive institutional DE&I programming:

- ◆ College of Agriculture
- ◆ College of Architecture, Design, and Construction
- ◆ Harbert College of Business (links to a nonexistent webpage)
- ◆ College of Education
- ◆ Honors College
- ◆ College of Human Sciences
- ◆ College of Liberal Arts
- ◆ Harrison School of Pharmacy
- ◆ College of Veterinary Medicine

We demand that Auburn University allocate adequate funding to go toward the operations of existing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs and committees and toward the establishment of such programs where they are lacking. For example, BGPSA needs around \$60,000 per year to operate, including expenses for DiCE.

Examples of DE&I initiatives towards which this funding will be allocated include:

- ◆ Prison Arts Program
- ◆ Engineering Academic Excellence Program
- ◆ Alumni Association of Inclusion & Diversity
- ◆ COSAM Office of Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity
- ◆ Bias Education and Response Team (BERT)

2

Create & Publish Strategic Plans for Each Campus Unit

Targets: Provost Hardgrave

Proposed Deadline: Implemented in 2021-22 year

Recommendation #2 from the 2015 Climate Survey states that “All Colleges, Schools, support units, and campus organizations should develop..., assess, and fully implement an inclusion and diversity plan.” The recommendation also stipulates that plans must be updated annually with “a comprehensive report on actions and efforts to support inclusion and diversity strategies.” While this recommendation has been approached by campus units, plans are vague and annual updates are either elusive or nonexistent. This directly contradicts the recommendation’s demand that plans “should be clearly visible and effectively communicated to all stakeholders.”

We demand that the requirements of school, college, and unit plans are updated to reflect the following conditions, in addition to previous requirements:

- ◆ Create a substantive, clear, and well-organized strategic planning process
- ◆ Incorporate equity into plans, assessments, and reports
- ◆ Model inclusive and equitable approaches for engagement, decision making, and communications
- ◆ Implement ample feedback opportunities for constituents and partners

All plans and progress reports must be clear and accessible, and housed together on the OID website. Along with the plans, the website must also house the following information:

- ◆ Progress reports for DE&I plans
- ◆ Resources and unit-specific DE&I programs and initiatives
- ◆ Outline of campus-wide DE&I personnel and structure

Examples: [University of Michigan Unit Plans](#), [Organizing and Implementing a Strategic Plan](#)

3

Establish a Staff Governance Group that Parallels Faculty Senate

Targets: Provost Hardgrave

Proposed Deadline: New staff senate begins in 2022-23 year

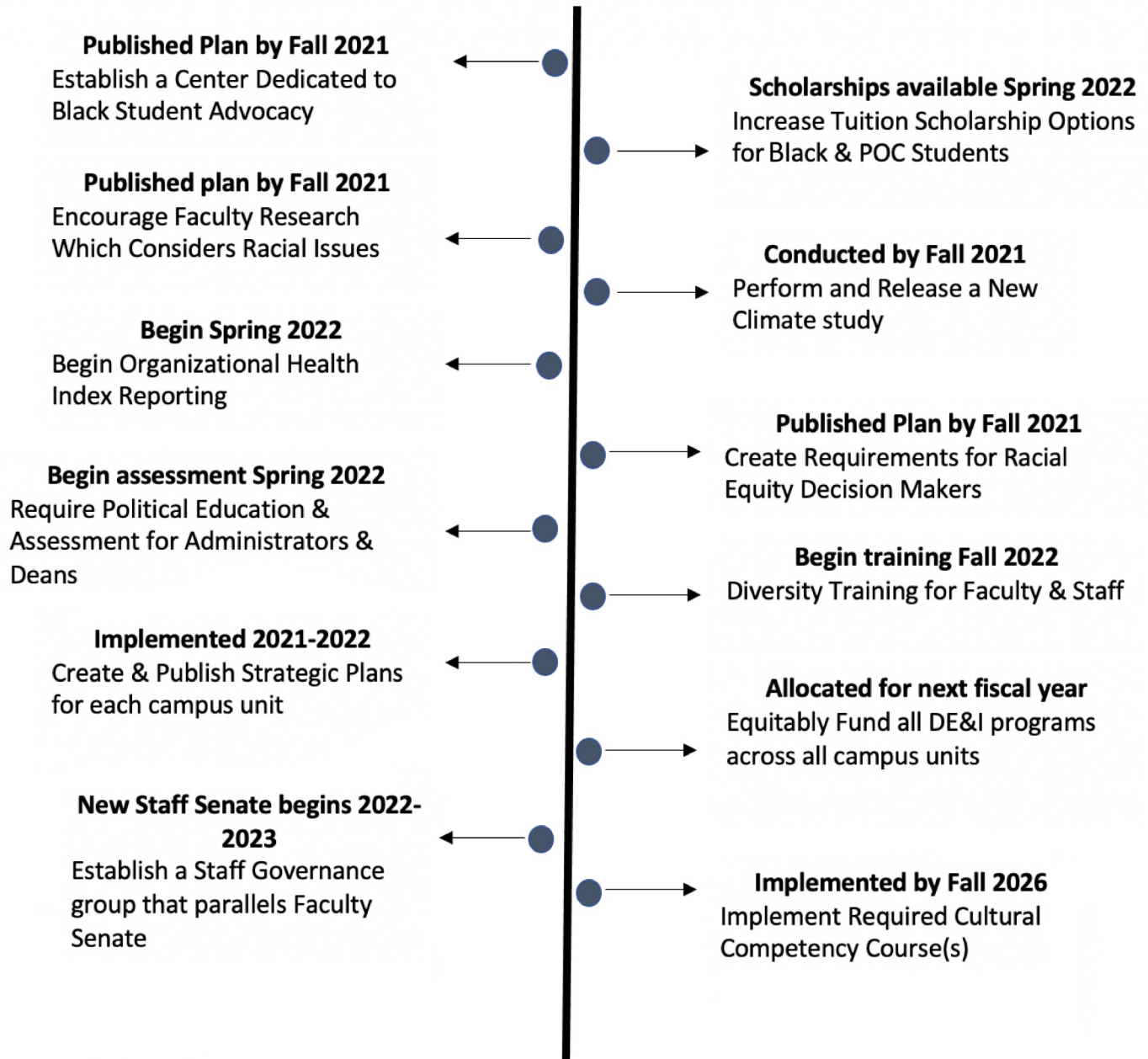
The majority of Black people employed by Auburn University are staff, not faculty. Through our Listening Sessions, we learned that staff feel there is a lack of representation for their needs. Black staff receive fewer benefits and less representation than faculty or students. Student Affairs staff are often at the “bottom of the food chain” and lack direct influence and representation in administrative circles. Auburn University staff currently have one forum for advocacy: Staff Council. While the operations of this group are similar to other governance bodies on campus, input from Black staff who attended our listening sessions demonstrates that the Staff Council does not have nearly the same influence as Faculty Senate.

We demand that administrators determine the cause of the lack of staff support and recreate the Staff Council to address staff needs with the same level of influence as the Faculty Senate. We also demand that all Auburn University Staff members receive full benefits, such as health insurance and tuition assistance.

Example: [University of Virginia Staff Senate](#)

Timeline of Demand Implementation

The following timeline is created from the suggested deadlines for each demand and can serve as a potential long-term timeline for implementing demands.



Conclusion

The demands listed throughout this document have been developed with a great deal of care and love for the present and past Black members of the Auburn community who strive daily to make this campus a more inclusive and equitable space for all. Our current action builds upon their experiences and work to establish racial justice on this campus.

In addition, we would like to leave a disclaimer with these demands. Certainly, meeting any or all of these demands will require a large amount of work. It is likely that our suggested deadlines, though informed by research and conversation with experienced parties, may even be unrealistic. However, we insist that Auburn University administrators are capable of and responsible for seeing these demands through as soon as possible, regardless of whether our estimates are accurate.

Finally, we would like to firmly state that the result of these demands should not cause disproportionate additional work for the students or staff of the Office of Inclusion and Diversity (OID). We have already witnessed how initiatives like Student Involvement's 2019 "Breaking Barriers" event, President Gogue's Listening Sessions, and the Presidential Task Force for Opportunity & Equity have exploited the time and labor of Black students and staff without meeting their needs. To that end, while this work will need to be collaborative and span multiple departments, we ask that the University refrain from tasking OID with the sole responsibility of fulfilling these demands.

Contact

Anyone interested in contacting us about these demands, or our current or future work, may do so at auburn4change@gmail.com. For information about our organization or our past initiatives, please visit auburn4change.wordpress.com.