

Friday March 19, 2021

Dear President Porter, Provost/Senior Vice-President Mark Arant, Senior Vice President Terry Whittum, Vice President for Human Resources Deb Ayres, Faculty Council President Annie Alameda, Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator Kelly Moyich:

We, Lindenwood students, are writing on behalf of the Genders and Sexualities Alliance, Student Government, and Alpha Phi Omega, to lodge a formal complaint and air many grievances with the university, especially its upper administration. We will no longer sit back and tolerate the SHAMEFUL and painstakingly slow-moving advances of DEI efforts at Lindenwood. We have immediate asks and expect nothing less than timely responses to our concerns.

Specifically, it is our position that:

- 1) DEI efforts are nothing more than window dressing at the upper admin level, leaving faculty, faculty council, staff, staff council, and students to do all the heavy lifting
- 2) Upper Administration's lack of communication and preparedness in ensuring a seamless continuation of the critical work of the CDI (Center for Diversity and Inclusion), which is part of the alleged DEI efforts at the university, are UNACCEPTABLE and APPALLING.

Our outrage is shared by many students, staff, and faculty. While we know that WE, the students, are your profit center, we take the very serious responsibility of holding you accountable for doing better. This is not necessarily about a single employee. Rather, it is about the thoughtlessness and lack of preparedness for a plan of continuation. Your decisions and lack of preparedness are taking a horribly negative toll on us at the literal worst point in time.

Did you ever take into consideration that the CDI staff member functioned as a literal lifeline? Ready to greet, virtually or in-person, converse, support, and guide, aside from the other duties they were tasked with? Do you understand, President Porter, Provost Arant, Terry Whittum, Deb Ayres, et al, that you have removed an actual lifeline from us with NO warning or

communication? That is not a euphemism. It looks like, aside from the usual PR nightmare that your superficial Diversity efforts typically create, YOU all are the ones who need schooling in the art of being “team players”!

We take this action, many past years of failing to prioritize real DEI advances, and subsequent inaction to communicate and reach out to US, your students, your MOST vulnerable student populations, your queer students, your non-white, non-cisgender, differently abled, international students, about the recent changes with the CDI, as the ultimate **epitome** of your expression of how little we matter, as an expression of what you do NOT prioritize.

We are NOT talking about the many times that LU has “reorganized” in the last several years. We are talking about priorities to DEI and actually putting some thought and care into decisions that may do wonders for your images and bank accounts, but that have high negative stakes for us, your students. Maybe your reorganization has a replacement in mind, and the CDI may be back up and running at some point. This is not the issue.

The decision to terminate a position with no immediate communication to us on any interim fill in or back up plan is irresponsible and destructive. Your actions have done serious harm to us. That was a position that served so many other purposes aside from what any job description could have detailed. They kept our vulnerable student populations seen, content, and **retained** at the University. These actions are detrimental to anyone who is not a straight white human. The CDI staff member served those who felt neglected and otherwise ignored by this often underserving and disappointing university.

The Center of Diversity and Inclusion is/was a beacon for students who struggle to feel at home at Lindenwood. Unfortunately, since we are now on day 5 without any interim announcement, we see where your priorities lie. The lack of preparedness pursuant to the decision to terminate this position is confirmation that Lindenwood does not value us, and struggles to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion. There are countless other examples to back this up; this is merely the icing on the cake.

So many of your students continue to struggle with finding resources or support, and spaces like the CDI are a way for groups of diversity to come together and find comfort where it is lacking elsewhere. Who is planning and executing Safe Zone trainings? Gender Bias trainings? All those other valuable trainings that so many learned from and valued?

We expect a prompt reply about your interim plan to hobble together some semblance of what the CDI was for us. We see you continuing to NEED DEI efforts in your strategic plan to check your boxes and to preach it as a marketing campaign with little thought or proactive plans behind it. We will no longer tolerate this. More soon.

Signed,

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