

“Let me say clearly to Black Students, faculty and staff, we will fight alongside you because **Black Lives Matter**.”

-President Smatresk. University of Northern Texas

At the risk of redundancy, and as a piggy backing to the letter recently sent by Lindenwood’s Genders and Sexualities Alliance (GSA,) we, the members of the BSU, are resending our letter from last year. We ask that you read it and take action. Today’s letter is in direct response to the recent, unannounced, thoughtless change/termination of the CDI staff position. You and your team eliminated this position with NO clear path of communication, and no interim plan to staff that office while you do whatever you are going to do with the CDI. You shut down this position, and in so doing, you shut down, one week and counting, what the CDI did for this institution.

You clearly do not care enough about diversity to maintain the position or have a readied plan of continuation for the CDI. So, announcing that the position would be eliminated without a PRIOR announcement that another position was forthcoming and without communication to the student body who relies on the CDI for a number of things, you have done irreparable harm to us all. This, and other things, serve as evidence of how little you think of your black student, staff, and faculty population, all who are served by the CDI and serious DEI efforts in general.

Please save the Task Forces and Executive Boards. They delay action. They buy time. Please be specific and reply to our concerns. We reiterate your letter to the Lindenwood Staff, faculty, and students in 2020 was a poor excuse in an attempt to sympathize with your black staff, black faculty, and black students. Nowhere in that letter did you come out and say that you support **Black Lives**, but John Porter, you did come out and say openly and proudly that you “support law enforcement.” Now we do not fault you for supporting law enforcement, but in this time when law enforcement is actively murdering black people that look just like the students who attend Lindenwood University, you have to know this is a slap in the face to us! Failing to use your platform to affirm the value of Black Lives is shameful. Maybe part of the issue is Lindenwood Board, to whom it appears you (and past presidents) must defer, or maybe it is the donors of the University, to whom it appears you (and past presidents) must defer. Maybe they put words in and take words out of your mouth. But now, Spring 2021, is the time to be a leader and make the decision to put action behind language, behind DEI rhetoric. First, though, in order to move to act, you must START at least using language that is affirming and inclusive, that saves lives instead of takes lives! And you are in familiar company. Lindenwood Presidents of the past have similarly failed to use their platform to advance this institution into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They, like you, failed to prioritize inclusion and equity.

In that statement from last year regarding the murder of George Floyd, you used language that openly embraced law enforcement, but not your own Black students, faculty, and staff. Your

short tenure has been a **disappointment**. You let your students down in a time where we need all the support in the world. You let your own staff and faculty **down** with your neglect to outright support **Black Lives**... **Shame** on you John Porter. **Shame** on you because when your students, faculty and staff, many of whom pay thousands of dollars to attend this University, need their institution's leader to stand with them; you didn't.

Instead, opted to approve a statement that you would appease your peers and not ruffle any feathers. When it comes to the life and death of black bodies, John Porter, there is no time to be weary of shareholders. There is no time to be frightened to ruffle feathers. There is no time to be scared to say **Black Lives Matter**. Our lives matter. When our University's president neglects to mention that in his letter that is meant to console our students, faculty and staff, what are we to think of you? Certainly, we cannot think you stand with us. We do not pay tens of thousands of dollars to this University to not be heard. We do not pay tens of thousands of dollars to this institution so that we can be heard but our actions and demands not be met. Your letter/statement was **too little, too late, and disappointing**. But at least we now know there is an issue, and we are here to stand up and rectify it.

Lindenwood speaks endlessly about diversity and inclusion, but is that really in this institution's heart? Is it really in the board's heart? Is that really in the Deans' hearts? Is that really in your heart John Porter? It's extremely easy to say that you stand for something, but when the time comes to step up to the plate, when the trend to push inclusion is not around and when it is time to show that inclusion and diversity is in your heart. will you show up? Or will it be more endless talk that means absolutely nothing?

These questions need to be answered because we deserve to know what type of institution, we are currently attending last year, I asked you if we are we attending a university where diversity and inclusion is nothing more than a fictional story to bring in minority groups to simply show numbers of diverse populations. You did not reply to that question. You created a meaningless Executive Board for the BSU. We demand answers! We demand change. In fact, we demand that you sit down with us and the other student organizations that we are partnering with and listen to our voices, and then use your privilege and act.

### **Our List of Demands**

1. We demand to have a meeting with President John Porter once every 3 months to ensure our voices are heard and progress is being made.

2. We demand that implicit bias training be made mandatory for all administrations, including you, John Porter, staff, faculty, and professors.
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4. We demand that an African American studies course be mandatory for all majors.
5. We demand that any student, staff, or faculty that is found to have documented statements or actions that perpetuate racism be investigated, suspended, and depending upon the outcome of said investigation, be terminated.
6. We demand to see more black representation in our professors and our faculty.

Signed,

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