

February 9th, 2019

UC Regents,

We appreciate your presence at the end of our meeting with the Chancellor yesterday and are grateful for your willingness to listen to the presentation of our demands. It is important to us that our own administration, UCOP, and all those involved with the UC system hear our struggle and understand the daily frustrations of Black students.

With that being said, we would like to inform you of an incidence of hate and extreme bias that took place during the meeting before you stepped in that made us as a team feel incredibly uncomfortable, unheard as students AND Black people, and invalidated by the University. Towards the end of our meeting, Assistant Vice Chancellor Maria Herrera Sobek made some comments that were both disturbing and insulting, especially for their irrelevance to the topic at hand. She explained her frustration at a previous Black administrator's work with Black students, even though all those who know said administrator agreed and stated in the meeting that the administrator explicitly advocated for all students at UCSB. AVC Herrera Sobek stated that the administrator did not have much involvement with "Hispanic students" and that it was because of the perceived "focus" on Black students that the administrator was unable to commit themselves to the Chicana/Latina student population. She stressed that she wished that the administrator would've focused more on their work with "Hispanic students" and stated that she even brought this issue to the attention of the administrator. She continued to belittle the struggle of Black UCSB students and Black people by minimizing the Black identity as a whole and claiming that "we are all African." The Chancellor himself appeared to be uncomfortable with her statements, as he hastily attempted to change the subject after allowing her to continue to speak on the issue for quite some time.

This iteration of anti-Blackness is not foreign to Black students at UCSB or any university for that matter, but it is especially troubling that it was so overtly displayed by a member of our own administration. Not only was AVC Herrera Sobek's attack on the previous administrator's character irrelevant to our discussion about advancing demands that aim to better our Black community on campus, but it was troublesome for us to hear an administrator whose position is explicitly and solely dedicated to diversity and equity on campus use such apparent anti-Black rhetoric. It was just in November of 2018 that an administrator at Santa Barbara City College used a historically derogatory term to refer to Black people during a meeting and that same word was written on some of SBCC's property in reference to two students less than a month later. Earlier in 2018, the Black Student Union at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo brought grievances to their administration after a group of white students held a party that encouraged the imitation of Black culture and saw white students photographed in blackface. Black students across the board continue to be undervalued and underserved at an institutional level within university systems and our meeting yesterday proved how ignorant our own administration is to the plights of Black students.

Yet, we are appalled that our Assistant Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion would attempt to draw lines and priorities between marginalized groups. Although we, the BSU Demands Team, have a focus on the well being and achievement of Black students, we recognize the needs and plights of ALL marginalized entities on campus and would expect for the University to value and uphold ALL underserved students with EQUAL respect.

It is for these reasons and many more that we held the meeting yesterday to advocate for the Office of Black Student Development, the 8 positions to be housed within the office, and a building to serve our current Black students and to commemorate the hard work and activism of all previous Black students. This university continues to prove its lack of understanding for the needs and lived experiences of the Black population on campus and yesterday was a clear indication that, for some, Black lives do not matter at UCSB. We need Black representation on campus whose sole dedication is to advocate for Black students and Black people. We need Black representation on campus who understand the lived experiences of Black people at UCSB and can accurately convey those experiences to the greater campus community in the hopes of creating systemic change. We need Black representation who will hold the University accountable to Black students to ensure that Black students have guaranteed success during their time at UCSB. And we need a space where Black students and Black people can meet, work, study, and enjoy, a space that is removed from the everyday microaggressions and iterations of anti-Blackness that take away from our ability to achieve academically and thrive holistically.

We hope that this University will soon uphold the commitment that it has claimed to have made to Black students for the last 50 years. We hope that Black students will soon be valued as any other student is at UCSB. We hope that Black students will soon be given the same respect that this University gives to the greater campus community.

UCSB BSU Demands Team  
UCSB Black Student Union

Grievances from Black students who attended the meeting:

“It was racially insensitive, and completely ignorant of the pressing needs of Black students...as Black students make up only 5% of the UCSB student population and do not have a centralized space for resources and development, we find ourselves being significantly underserved. With no formal positions or offices solely dedicated to uplifting the Black student population, we are relegated to a position of communal disunity and misguidance. Resources such as the ADCRC are helpful, but insufficient, and it is quite clear that more drastic measures must be taken.”

-Jordan Fobbs, 1st year

“She clearly expressed that the only message she took from our sentiments is that [the previous administrator] was not on her team...Her outcry that “Mexico has Afrikan roots, we’re all Black” shows hypocrisy at its highest. I wonder what specifically she has done to try to stop or decrease

the degradation and racial oppression that many students on campus iterate towards Black and Afro-latinx people...“I wish I did more for black students on campus” is a tell all admittance from the UCSB diversity and inclusion chair.”

-Mariyah Lewis, 3rd year

“I was shocked and saddened to hear an administrator who is placed in a position to work with and advocate for diversity on our campus community be so overtly discriminatory towards a minority population, specifically one that is so greatly marginalized here at UCSB. It shows just how far we have to go at UCSB in terms of teaching administration and our campus community that we deserve to be valued and understood, just as any other marginalized population does.”

-Samantha Sanchez, 4th year

“AVC Sobek's comments during the BSU Demands meeting proved the inadequacy of our administration in terms of understanding anti-Blackness, both explicitly and implicitly, both at a systemic and an interpersonal level. Having to experience microinvalidations and microinsults during a meeting where we were expressing the need for a Black department that explicitly serves Black student needs, was both ironic and truly disheartening. AVC Sobek comments proved that administration needs anti-Blackness and microaggression training, and that microaggressive racism is rampant on this campus and needs to be corrected immediately. An Office of Black Student Development is needed immediately to keep administration accountable and aware of Black student needs. AVC Sobek's comment of “we are all African” was not only a microaggression, but it completely invalidated the experiences of Black students on this campus and Black people in this country. Every marginalized group faces their own hardships and oppressions from this institution. This is not the Oppression Olympics. Therefore, we hold every right to advocate for our community and DEMAND that the administration take the appropriate steps to better the conditions of Black students on this campus, based off of our experiences as Black students on this campus. It is the administration’s duty to understand the needs of every student and every community here at UCSB. We DEMAND that administration does better.”

-Taylor Jackson, 3rd year

March 5, 2019

TO: BSU Demands Team

FROM: Henry T. Yang

RE: **UCSB Administration Supports BSU Proposal**

Dear BSU Demands Team,

I am sorry that it has taken so long to get back to you. I've been going through the consultative and budget planning process and we are now ready to send you this response to your proposal of February 8 for the Office of Black Student Development. We affirm your goal to support Black student achievement and to address educational inequities and want to provide strong support for your proposal.

The BSU proposal is in alignment with UCSB's Principles of Community which include creating a culture that affirms the intrinsic dignity in each of us, celebrating differences, and making UCSB an inclusive environment in which to live, work, and learn. An Office for Black Student Development is an important resource that advances our institutional [Principles of Community](#).

My office will provide funding to implement the staffing structure you proposed, including the Director and Assistant Director positions for the Office of Black Student Development along with the 2 academic support counselors, the recruitment and retention specialist, the coordinator of Black Student Life, and two advocacy counselors. Margaret Klawunn will work with you on these hires, and the positions will be within the Division of Student Affairs. We invite you to nominate students, faculty, and staff to serve on all of the Search Committees.

You have also been awarded \$55,000 annually in programming monies.

As the positions are hired, we will work with you to identify appropriate space. We will strive to work toward the vision of a Center for Black Student Development over the next several years. The campus is just beginning a process of planning for future capital projects which can assist in addressing the space needs for a Center for Black Student Development. As a long-standing campus request, we will make sure that this Center is an important priority within campus planning.

I am pleased to commit to more institutional support for the academic success and well-being of Black students at UC Santa Barbara.