

July 27, 2020

Dear Queensborough Community College (QCC) Faculty and Staff,

We write as concerned colleagues as we watch disturbing trends in how the Queensborough community has responded to injustice in our immediate community and our society at large. Bigotry and racism are dangerous vices, but silence is perhaps the most deadly of them all. If not for silence and reticence, George Floyd, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, and countless others would probably be alive today. Oftentimes, letters and statements are forms of virtue signaling, when they are not accompanied by direct plans for action. We cannot tolerate silence, complacency, and mere virtue signaling, when our physical and mental health and our right to exist at Queensborough Community College are at stake.

To facilitate a more unified campus, we must unequivocally dismantle the system of white complacency and white supremacy that insidiously governs the way our college operates. While events of the recent past have thrust us into action, we are not focused on individuals but the pernicious systems that work to keep us oppressed. Our promotional literature states that Queensborough Community College (QCC) is the paragon of diversity. Our students hail from 127 unique countries and speak 78 different languages. We are a Minority-Serving Institution, a distinction that allows us many favors, grants, and benefits. While we should be proud of our student population's diversity, we should be ashamed that our faculty stands in woeful contrast. With a student population that is 85% BIPOC, our faculty is only 36% BIPOC. In disaggregating the faculty portrait, we see Black faculty within the tenure track make up a paltry 10% of the professoriate and 15% of the staff that serves our students.

According to the most recent data, Black faculty comprise 10% (n=42) of the full-time faculty at QCC (n=42). Of that number, a mere 1% (n=6) are Full professors, 1.6% (n=7) are Associate Professors, and 4% (n=17) are Associate Professors. The staff representation at QCC also reflects dismal numbers. While 15.9% (n=39) of HEOs identify as Black, QCC has only six (2.4%) HEOs at the highest rank of Higher Education Officer and seven (2.8%) Higher Education Associates.

These numbers are disconcerting and an embarrassment to an institution that prides and markets itself as diverse. Among the ranks of faculty at QCC are those who are qualified for tenure-track positions but who languish under the glass ceiling of lecturer positions. Within our faculty, then, Black voices are silenced and primarily relegated to junior faculty positions. Here, they are forced to remain silent in the face of systemic racism or speak up at the risk of being vilified, pacified, or losing essential milestones

and promotions. Silencing is exacerbated by some white faculty and staff members who spew racist vitriol, with impunity. This impunity is implicit and is seemingly granted merely by their proximity to the culture of power. The power brokers look like them, and so they feel safe and secure in their racist ideology.

The senior leadership of the college reflects the same abysmal statistic. The president's cabinet is mostly white, with only one Black vice president represented. The members of the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) are primarily white, with only two Black members of the faculty represented. The Steering Committee of the Academic Senate consists of no Black members. The Committee of Department Chairpersons of the college consists of mostly white members, with no Black faculty represented. Departmental Personnel and Budget committees are overrepresented by the white faculty members. White faculty members widely occupy Senate committees on curricular and budget matters, while most faculty of color historically hold membership on student activity-based committees.

These practices stand in stark opposition to the written mission of QCC, which seeks to “[uphold] its commitment to inclusiveness, freedom of speech and mutual respect.” The senior leadership has stated the following in “solidarity” with a “commitment to change, justice, and equity”:

*As one of the most diverse colleges in the nation, Queensborough remains steadfast in upholding its commitment to inclusiveness, freedom of speech, and mutual respect. These values have always been and will continue to be, the foundation that supports our mission as an institution of higher education.*

*We condemn all acts of discrimination, violence, and intimidation based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability, or politics.*

*As we face the daunting challenge that tears at the very fabric of our unity as a nation, we further affirm the dignity, diversity, equity and inclusivity of all of our students, faculty, and staff.*

*We believe a transformative education -- reflective, thoughtful, and respectful of all -- requires that we work together to advance social justice by fostering openness, transparency, and accountability among all members of our college community.*

*Our unique and powerful community -- one where teaching, learning and growing together is enriched by the diversity and creative expression of all of our students, faculty, and staff -- will inform how we move forward, amidst our grief and anger, to take us where we need to go; to the place where each and every American is treated with equal dignity, justice, and respect. (June 10, 2020)*

We receive these declarations and note that there are no action plans to accompany these statements of solidarity. Thus, we have composed an action plan to ensure that we hold the leadership accountable and make QCC a truly equitable space for Black faculty and staff, and consequently, everyone. For this, we know: all lives do not matter if Black lives do not matter. Scholar-Activist Verna Myers says, “diversity is inviting someone to the party and inclusion is asking them to dance.” Justice, however, allows every party-goer’s music choices to be played so everyone can participate on the dance floor.

## **\*ACTION PLAN\***

### **RECRUITMENT, HIRING, AND RETENTION OF BLACK FACULTY AND STAFF**

We believe that faculty and staff that is representative of the diverse student body, specifically targeting Black hires with attention to acute lack of representation in certain disciplines and departments is essential. The following points indicate actionable steps QCC should take towards achieving this goal:

-Provide accurate data on the recruitment and retention of Black faculty and staff. We need a robust effort that harnesses the talents of qualified Black candidates for all positions.

-Create faculty lines that are geared towards recruiting talented tenure-track faculty members of color.

-Investigate service load equity. Evidence suggests that Black faculty and staff are heavily recruited for college-wide and CUNY-wide diversity efforts. Yet, these forms of service are not deemed important to obtaining tenure and promotion.

-Identify qualified Black faculty members who languish in non-tenure track positions and consequently earn approximately \$5000 less than their colleagues of equal qualification by robustly revising the budgets of their departments to convert such positions to tenure-track positions.

- Address the lack of recognition (either in salary/promotion/pay or quantifiable recognition) of the amount of invisible labor Black faculty and staff contribute to the college. Black faculty and staff routinely perform unrecognized labor beyond job

description to confront anti-blackness in their institutional roles and to advocate for Black students who suffer regular indignities.

-Develop mentoring initiatives that groom Black faculty and staff at QCC to serve on departmental Personnel and Budget (P&B) committees, on college-wide search committees, and in the positions of Affirmative Action representatives for searches.

-Provide targeted mentorship for Black faculty and staff. This form of mentorship should include but not be exclusive to matching faculty/staff members with mentors in their areas of study or department, to allow for collaborative work and community-building.

-Become a member institution with programs that help faculty and staff of color thrive and advance in their careers. Organizations such as The National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity provide support, mentoring, and professional development. Programs such as the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellowship Program provide professional development and training for emerging leaders.

-Develop opportunities that call for cross-cultural dialogue, particularly between Black faculty/staff and non-Black faculty/staff. All faculty/staff must understand how institutional racism keeps Black faculty/staff, invisible, unsupported, and afraid to speak up.

-Provide support, space, and programming for Black faculty and staff to network and interact with each other and with the senior leadership of the college without fear of retaliation.

-Increase recruitment of Black faculty on mid-level and senior-level tenure lines so that they enter QCC with agency and the ability to advocate for themselves and hold senior leadership positions.

### **LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION IN SENIOR POSITIONS**

-Create a diversity suite with leadership positions that focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice. The suite would include:

1. A Vice President of DEI(SJ) whose primary role would be to facilitate a division of DEI(SJ) with a robust budget and strategic 5-year plan toward capacity building, aiming to move QCC toward a more equitable environment for Black faculty and staff.

2. A Faculty Fellowship in DEI(SJ) whose role would be to focus on academic programs and implementation, providing research materials, and building a database of anti-racist pedagogical materials and strategies to help decenter whiteness in departmental curriculum
3. A multicultural resource center with a robust budget for faculty and students that provides ongoing support to the entire college in the areas of program planning and development, training and resource management, and overall guidance for faculty, staff, and students.

-Reflect on leadership roles in student services, an area densely populated by Black staff who are often in management roles but are underrepresented in senior-level positions and create space for representatives who are Black to occupy such positions.

-Examine the Human Resources department to ensure that there is representation by Black men and women.

### **ESTABLISHING A DEPARTMENT OF CRITICAL ETHNIC STUDIES**

-Establish a Critical Ethnic Studies Department. This department will allow for joint appointments of professors in other departments to populate and diversify the range of courses that may be offered. Overall, the college needs to offer more courses in critical ethnic studies in all areas of humanities across departments at QCC.

### **SUPPORT OF BLACK STUDENTS**

-Provide support for Black students to establish a Black Student Union at QCC. In addition, the College must support Black students by establishing various clubs and initiatives geared toward the retention and educational development of Black students (ie: National Association of Black Engineers, CUNY Black Male initiative).

-Work to end the inequities faced by BIPOC students who are provided equity in access but then inequities in the opportunities afforded to them for success in CUNY and at QCC. Since 1975, there has been a net reduction in the per-student funding of CUNY and it is not simply coincidence that as the CUNY student population has grown more diverse, public support decreases.

### **PROVIDING SERVICES TO FAMILIES**

-Reestablish the Campus Daycare. If we are to recruit a younger, more diverse faculty body, from myriad places, we must give consideration to their families and their family plans by providing access to facilities that allow them to ensure proper care for their children where kinship networks might not be available.

-We call upon the administration to provide adequate and robust facilities for women faculty when they return from paid family leave after giving birth. As it stands, there are not enough designated spaces for women to safely pump and store breastmilk. Having a daycare on campus would also allow BIPOC faculty to have access to these services and then provide them to their children.

In closing, if we are to create an academy that is diverse, inclusive, equitable, and just, Queensborough Community College must commit itself to providing support to Black faculty, staff, and students. The leadership of QCC must truly act and commit to accountability to ensure the safety, security, and longevity of *all of* its community members. To quote writer and producer Austin Channing Brown, “it seems ...at some point symbolic gestures from those who have the power to enact real change is another form of violence.”

**In Unity, Courage, and Resistance,**  
**The Black Faculty and Staff Association (BFSA)**  
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