

RESOLUTION 2009-2010 #27: Concerning the giving of support and assistance to the Black Student Union in establishing a Black Studies Department at Towson University

INTRODUCED ON: Tuesday, October 27, 2009

INTRODUCED BY: Senator Jessica Dickerson

RECOMMENDATION: Favorable w/amendments

SENATE ACTION: **PASSED 15-7-0**

ENACT UPON APPROVAL.

Jonathan Graf, President – Student Government Association

Description:

Need/Background:

The Black Student Union of Towson University is demanding an establishment of a Black/Africana Studies Department with the College of Liberal Arts within the next (five) 5 years. In accordance with this declaration, the BSU has these goals that identify the need for a Black/Africana Studies Department at TU:

- A production of scholarship that advances the progress of peoples apart of the African Diaspora.
- Use Towson University’s resources as the area’s premiere “metropolitan university” to foster substantive educational development and outreach to the peoples of the African Diaspora in the Baltimore Metropolitan Area.
- To make the State of Maryland a place for Black/Africana scholars to go in order to foster their scholarly work and make the school a locus for Black/Africana scholarship.
- The enrollment and overall resources invested in the African American Studies minor is extremely insufficient for Towson University to meet its burden as touting itself as a “metropolitan University”. The program is currently housed in the Interdisciplinary Studies department in the College of Liberal Arts. In the Interdisciplinary Studies department there are several other programs that center around diversity such as Jewish Studies, Latin American Studies, LGBT Studies and Asian Studies. The current enrollment in the Interdisciplinary Studies department as a whole is 71 undergraduate students; less than 25% of those students are enrolled in the African American Studies Program. Over time the BSU wants to increase participation in the current program, then help it move to a full major and then finally to a full department within the college. This process will involve, per the application and approval process to the Maryland Higher Education Commission, consolidating academic resources currently at our disposal to make the program financially feasible.

- Currently, scholarship concerning the African Diaspora is not integrated fully into the curriculum at TU with only one core class (AFST 201) being taught specifically in relation to the African Diaspora. The BSU wants to not only increase the amount of core classes but awareness of the program as a whole.

- There is a universalizing and acceptance of European-centered thought and practice in the world we live in (i.e. It is a General Education Requirement for students to learn *Western Heritage: Arts and Humanities*). A Black/Africana Studies Department, in concert with the new Diversity General Education requirement, will allow students to more openly engage in diversity in the classroom and to challenge structures of oppression and domination that exist in the status quo (i.e. White supremacy, racism, classism, patriarchy, homophobia, heteronormativity, xenophobia etc.).

- The core classes taught in the minor are extremely general and vague and do not focus on producing scholarship to advance the rigorous black intellectualism at Towson University. A Black/Africana Studies Department corrects this by adding curriculum that adequately represents the black experience.

- The core classes are taught at once a week obscure times, contributing to fluctuating enrollment (eg. Friday at 2PM). As a result, those classes are typically either extremely overcrowded or severely underpopulated. This severely limits the possibility of students to engage in Black/Africana academia. The BSU wants to work actively with the chair of the Interdisciplinary Studies Department to change this condition, since the chairs of departments are the ones who have sole control over class scheduling.

- Rigorous Black intellectualism is not integrated into Academic Affairs and all responsibility is vested in Student Affairs, through the SGA, BSU, African American Cultural Center and Center for Student Diversity, which effectively severs student participation in either department. A Black/Africana Studies department would unite these aspects of campus and help both departments communicate better on a wider scale. This also facilitates a way for students of the African Diaspora to learn about themselves in relationship to the rest of the world.

- Only one university in the State of Maryland has a Black/Africana Studies Department (College Park), and this initiative will move the University System of Maryland (USM) in the direction of bringing more Black/Africana scholars to institutions of higher education in Maryland. The BSU also strongly believes that this will alleviate some of the enrollment challenges that TU has faced with its students of color. If those students feel that the University is taking steps to make Black/Africana peoples more involved in higher education through academia, then when students are learning about the university on their first few visits, they can use the department as a resource to help them understand themselves in relation to the rest of the world.

Research:

In direct response to the demand of the Black students at Towson University who see it as a necessity to produce and nurture Black/Africana Studies in Maryland's premiere "metropolitan university".

The Black Student Union at Towson University was created on February 25, 1970 with demands similar to that of this resolution, which were to provide service, support and advancement for peoples apart of the African Diaspora at Towson University.

Programs and departments of African American studies were first created in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of inter-ethnic student and faculty activism at many universities in the United States, sparked by a five month strike for black studies at San Francisco State. In February 1968, San Francisco State hired sociologist Nathan Hare to coordinate the first black studies program and write a proposal for the first Department of Black Studies; the department was created in September 1968 and gained official status at the end of the five-months strike in the spring of 1969.

This resolution and initiative is in accordance with the 2000 Partnership Agreement between the State of Maryland and the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, United States v. Fordice, 505 U.S. 717 (1992) and any other applicable federal and state laws. This means that a Black/Africana Studies Department at Towson University does not duplicate and/or replicate a current program at a historically black college in the State of Maryland. The only university in the State of Maryland with a Black/Africana Studies Department is the University of Maryland, College Park.

This resolution is also in accordance with items 9 and 10 on the Student Bill of Rights. (see attached). Also, as a point of reference, action being called upon by the Black Student Union in this resolution is accordance with the following sections of the SGA Constitution:

- Preamble
- Article II, Section Eleven, Subpoint A
- Constitutional By-Laws, Section I, Rule Four, Subpoint A
- Constitutional By-Laws, Section II, Rule Six, Subpoint A

Action:

The Student Government Association of Towson University shall participate in the development of a Black Studies Department at Towson University.

This will be a coordinated project between the following representatives in the Student Government Association of Towson University:

- Vice President, Student Government Association
 - Will oversee the representatives of the SGA involved with the initiative.
 - Report directly to the Executive Board about all things related to the Black/Africana Studies Department.
 - Talk to administrators about the department and find out their perspectives on implementing the department.
- Diversity Representative
 - Will ensure all the correct guidelines and diversity standards are met according to State of Maryland, the United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, United States v. Fordice, 505 U.S. 717 (1992) and any other applicable federal and state laws.
 - Ensuring the student leaders in the African Diaspora at Towson University are kept in abreast of issues pertaining to the Black Studies Department Initiative. As a mandatory requirement the Black Student Union and African Diaspora Club must always have representation in relation to those issues.
- Director of Academic Affairs
 - Work directly with the President of Towson University, Provost, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Chair of Interdisciplinary Studies, Chair of the African American Studies program and all other applicable academic representation to ensure that the program is implemented in Academic Affairs over the next five (5) years.
 - Report directly to the senate in a bi-weekly report on the progress with the Black/Africana Studies Department in all facets in the SGA Meeting.
 - Will aid in presenting the application for the department to the university system with a report of all resources that will be consolidated by the university to create the department.
- Director of Legislative Affairs
 - Work directly with leaders in the University System to ensure that all the resources that are needed are allocated in order to institute the department.
 - Compile data necessary to understand the scope of resources needed from the University System to make the department feasible.
 - Will aid in presenting the application for the department to the university system to institute the department..

This will be a continuing initiative through the Diversity Representative, the Student Government Association as a whole and the Black Student Union over the next five (5) years.

As an aside, if a Black/Africana Studies Department is *not* established in 5 (five) years for whatever circumstance, then at the SGA Meeting on Tuesday October 27, 2015, the Student

Government Association at Towson University will present a resolution on affirming its commitment to an establishment of a Black/Africana Studies Department at Towson University.

The Student Government Association of Towson University requests that the President's Council assemble a committee including student representatives from the SGA and the BSU to explore the feasibility and requirements of the creation of a Black/Africana Studies Department at Towson University. This committee will work through the process of developing the program and would report back to the SGA semi-annually on the status of their work.

The Student Bill of Rights

We the students establish that these rights and privileges are endowed to every Towson University student.

1. Every Towson University student has the right to participate in the open exchange of ideas; as set forth in the U.S. Constitution, including free speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly, and there shall be no university or administrative rule that infringes upon these rights, unless previously stipulated in the University's established *Time, Place* and *Manner Policy*.
2. Every Towson University student has the right to personal privacy and property; except when otherwise provided by law or the University's *Code of Conduct*, and these rights will be observed by both students and University authorities alike.
3. Every Towson University student has the right to protest any policy or procedure that is established or revised without the contribution and consideration of Towson University students in the academic community.
4. Every Towson University student shall be free from punitive action by University officials for any violations of either civil or criminal law off campus; except when such a violation is also determined to be a violation of provisions stipulated in the Towson University *Policy on Off-Campus Disorderly and Disruptive Conduct*.
6. Every Towson University student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of either the Towson University *Code of Conduct* or the Towson University *Academic Integrity Policy* shall be assured a prompt and fair process, as set forth by the Towson University *Code of Conduct*.
7. Every Towson University student has the right to be recognized as members of the student body, endowing with all the privileges of a student, including the use of all university services and facilities.
8. Every Towson University student has the constitutional rights and responsibilities of any citizen under the law and therefore, an inherent responsibility to respect the rights of every other member of the University community.
- 9. Every Towson University student has the right to expect that any and all academic and non-academic processes will be periodically open to review.**
- 10. Every Towson University student has the right to participate in the formulation and application of institutional policy affecting both academic and non-academic student affairs. The student's participation shall include but is not limited to the right to gain access to information, express views, and have these views considered.**
11. Every Towson University student has the right to be represented by a democratic Student Government Association.
12. Every Towson University student has the right to organize and join associations in order to promote common interests.
13. Every Towson University student has the right to obtain a clear statement of basic rights, obligations, and responsibilities concerning both academic and nonacademic student conduct.

14. Every Towson University student shall be protected from ex post facto regulations.

New Degree Programs¹

- Cover letter addressed to Secretary of Higher Education from chief academic officer requesting approval of a new degree program
- [Academic Proposal Form \(PDF\)](#)
- Description of how Program relates to institution's mission
- Educational objectives of the Program
- Description of program as it would appear in the catalog
- General requirements for degree
- Total number of credits and their distribution
- List of courses by title and number
- Description of thesis and/or non-thesis option for graduate programs
- Expected student learning outcomes
- Demonstrable quality of program faculty
- Student audience to be served by program and enrollment estimates
- Impact on student's technology fluency
- Library requirements
- Facilities and equipment
- Finance
- [Table 1: Resources \(PDF\)](#)
- [Table 2: Expenditures \(PDF\)](#)
- [COMAR Title 13B.02.03 \(PDF\)](#) for the full set of regulations

¹ Taken directly from Maryland Higher Education Commission's website" - <http://www.mhec.state.md.us/higherEd/acadAff/AcadProgInstitApprovals/NewDegreeProgramsUSM.asp>

United States v. Fordice, 505 U.S. 717 (1992) is a United States Supreme Court case that resulted in an eight to one ruling that the eight public universities in Mississippi had not sufficiently integrated and that the state must take affirmative action to change this under the Equal Protection Clause. The Court found that, although the state had eliminated explicit prohibitions on the admission of black students to institutions including the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, and the University of Southern Mississippi, the Court of Appeals had not properly review the set of discriminatory policies used by the state to suppress black enrollment at these schools.

Four opinions were filed in the case. In addition to Justice White's majority opinion, Justice O'Connor and Justice Thomas filed concurring opinions. Thomas, in particular, expressed a concern that the strict review of policies that divided students by race should not be used against historically black universities in the state.

Justice Scalia filed a separate opinion concurring in part and dissenting in part, expressing his disagreement with the burden that the Court imposed on universities and his concern that the standards set forth by the Court would create confusion and lead to more litigation.