



SIUC Faculty Association

IEA – NEA

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Social Justice for SIUC

Statement by the SIUC Faculty Association

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The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers has catalyzed a movement for social change in our country. Multiple acts of police brutality have provided vivid proof of systemic racism in the United States, as has the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Hispanic Americans.

We welcome the recent statements by SIU President Dan Mahony and SIUC Faculty Senate President Marcus Odom, but believe that the time has come for SIU to do more than hold conversations and enunciate general principles and goals. We need to change our priorities and redirect our resources at the scale necessary to face the moral challenge in front of us. The points below are designed to be first steps toward the sort of systemic change we need.

1. In the fall of 2019, of the 444 tenured or tenure-track faculty at SIUC, only 21 (4.7%) were African American and only 16 (3.6%) were Hispanic. These figures are unacceptable. For at least the next five years, half of all new tenure-track hires should be individuals from underrepresented groups. This will require a systemic change in how we go about hiring. We must make diversity a prime criterion for at least half of our hires, rather than a generalized afterthought in the hiring process. Women remain underrepresented on this campus, and we must also work to hire more women faculty, but our proposal would specifically mandate hiring from other underrepresented groups, including Black, Hispanic, and Native American faculty.
2. SIUC should devote resources to hiring faculty whose teaching and research centers on the promotion of diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. At least 10% of tenure track faculty hires in the next five years should be dedicated to hiring such faculty, with funds set aside for this purpose.
3. Our core curriculum should be modified to require a three-credit hour class in anti-racism. This should be in addition to the multicultural requirement in the core. Sufficient faculty with the relevant expertise and experience to teach these courses must be hired, and they should be predominantly tenure-track faculty to reflect a long-term commitment to this goal.

4. In recent years, SIUC has defunded and demoted departments, programs, and units designed to promote diversity and inclusion, including the Department of Africana Studies and the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies program. What were once free-standing resource centers have been conglomerated into one multicultural center, with a loss of institutional support and status. The Affirmative Action office has lost independence and status by being reconfigured as a subsidiary of Human Resources, rather than a unit in the Office of Diversity. The university must reverse this trend by providing units that promote diversity and inclusion with the resources, autonomy, and organizational status required for them to lead our efforts for social and racial justice.
5. We must reexamine our campus policing policies and reconsider the funding we devote to campus police. And as SIUC students routinely fall under the jurisdiction of Carbondale's police force, the university should also take part in a re-examination of the city's policing policies, staffing levels, and budget. We must not over-police our students.
6. We must make our student body more diverse. While our state and nation are growing more diverse, our student body has become less so. In 2015, 16.7% of our students were Black; in the fall of 2019 only 13.4% were Black. And while the percentage of Hispanic students has increased slightly (from 7.3% to 8.2%), it has gone down in absolute numbers, and a campus with a student body that is only 8.2% Hispanic is unacceptable when the population of our state is 17.4% Hispanic. We must make reverse this trend, not simply to turn around our declining overall enrollment figures, but because we have a moral obligation as a public university to serve all the people of Illinois. The steps above will help to address this problem, but we must work harder to understand why our campus is becoming less diverse, and redirect our priorities and resources to make SIUC a leader in diversity and inclusion.