

Open Letter to Foothill College Governance

To all Foothill College Governance Councils and Constituency Senates:

We as student leaders appreciate the seriousness and sincerity of your efforts to engage with our [letter](#) and following demands brought forth to the Academic Senate. Since June 2020, violence and systemic racism against the Black community has not ceased– there is still a long way to go.

The intent of this letter is to clarify and expand on these demands in order to provide a full scope of what we would like to see going forward, especially given that the 2020-2021 Strategic Objective for Foothill College’s Governance is equity.

To remind you of your own commitment to us:

*“Build on a culture of equity, inclusion, and diversity to propel the campus community to become a racially equitable college. Revise and complete the strategic equity plan (Equity Plan 2.0) by December 2020 so that it is structured within an institution-wide equity framework that centers race, includes a definitive scope for the equity work, and guides the college to action...Deep reflection of how operations impact equity at the **individual**, **cultural**, and **structural** levels forces us to engage in a comprehensive conversation towards how the campus will share the responsibility of providing a supportive student experience and more equitable outcomes for students of color.”*

The following are our demands in no particular order.

1. Ethnic Studies

In order to catalyze a **cultural** transformation of Foothill College, Ethnic Studies must first be recognized as a discipline. It also must be departmentalized and categorized under a new Ethnic Studies division. The following preliminary Ethnic Studies classes should be offered: Introduction to Ethnic Studies, Black/African American Studies, Indigenous/Native American Studies, Latinx Studies, Pacific Islander Studies, and Asian American Studies. These should not be the only course offerings, but the starter classes, with an emphasis on social justice and intersectionality. A look at the De Anza Intercultural Studies department course offerings shows the potential for what our course offerings can grow into. To teach these courses, Foothill College must hire full-time, tenure tracked faculty of color, with a priority given to Black and Indigenous applicants.

With the recent passage of AB 1460, the California State University system now requires Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement. This will provide further demand for these courses, as approximately 400 students transfer to the CSU system every year when looking at data from the past 5 academic years¹. The new Ethnic Studies courses must also articulate for this requirement.

¹ <https://foothill.edu/irp/2021/FH-2021-Q1-Report-AY19Transfers.pdf>

2. Diversifying Curriculum

Historically in academia, curriculum is white-washed and Eurocentric. Though appreciated efforts have been made in recent times to diversify existing curriculum by including more diverse perspectives and discussing uncomfortable history, not everyone has contributed to this effort equally, creating a disparity among course curriculum diversity.

At Foothill College, diverse authors, curriculum, and pedagogy employed in our Umoja and Puente programs must also be integrated into “mainstream” courses. For example, the Umoja program’s curriculum emphasizes African American culture, experience, and history– this curriculum should be present in other English, history, literature, and philosophy classes that are not a part of the program. Instructors must also address topics such as systemic racism, social activism, financial literacy, and service leadership in classrooms, regardless of the discipline. In other words, these discussions should be addressed not only in classes with a more obvious association to racial injustice but also in disciplines such as STEM, as students in these courses may eventually go into health and STEM careers and thus need to be prepared to uphold equity in their fields.

Hearing diverse perspectives is monumental in shaping our views. History classes should accurately address uncomfortable topics such as the slave history that precedes this country, as well as conversations about movements fighting systemic racism such as Black Lives Matter. Racism can only be effectively countered at the **individual** level through education, the core of Foothill College as an institution.

These further actions should be taken to diversify curriculum:

- A. Current curriculum should be reviewed quarterly to ensure that it is diversified by ensuring that it not only meets Title 5 requirements, but upholds values of equity, justice, and diverse perspectives.
- B. Academic division deans and faculty department chairs must meet regularly to ensure each department is working on diversifying their curriculum and must also create a plan of how they will address equity specifically within their department.
- C. Without burdening Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) faculty, department chairs and faculty must meet regularly with each other to discuss best practices and share ways to diversify curriculum.
- D. Students and student leaders should be invited to the aforementioned meetings.
- E. Teachers must also be evaluated on a quarterly basis so that they can be provided with feedback on how to improve their courses in terms of antiracism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

3. Mandatory Training

All Foothill College faculty, staff, and administration must be regularly educated and trained on topics such as implicit bias, systemic racism, white supremacy, white privilege, and social activism. The training sessions should be mandatory, last approximately 2 hours, and occur once a quarter. At the end of each

quarter, employees should reflect on how they have used their learnings from the training through an event. The training should also provide the opportunity to feature students speaking about their experiences in the classroom and on campus through panels and/or Porch Talks. Professional speakers, experts, and consultants should be brought into these training sessions as well to speak about these topics. Since these training sessions should be mandatory, we are calling upon your body to engage in negotiations with the appropriate bargaining units/unions to ensure this.

4. Faculty Diversity

Research has shown that increasing faculty diversity is helpful in reducing academic disparities for students of color; this identifies and stresses the need for diverse faculty to enhance student success, ultimately improving grades and retention. Therefore, there must be a focus on the hiring and retention of faculty of color² in order for Foothill College to continue to center student success.

Given that in Fall 2019, approximately 59% of tenured/tenure track faculty were white and approximately 64% of temporary faculty were white³, and that in Fall 2019, 68.6% of students identified as BIPOC⁴, we are calling upon Foothill College to do the following:

- A. Foothill College must commit not only to hiring more Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) faculty for tenure-track positions, but also to retaining these faculty.
- B. Students should be allowed, encouraged, and trusted to serve on hiring committees. Foothill College employees should make an active effort to let students know about this opportunity and why it is important through marketing and outreach.
- C. Equal Employment Opportunity training should be made mandatory for any faculty wanting to serve on a tenure committee.
- D. In order to boost retention, a mentor should be assigned to every new diverse faculty that is hired. BIPOC faculty mentors should be compensated appropriately for participation in this mentorship program.
- E. Foothill College must call upon and work with the District Office of Human Resources to ensure that all job descriptions are written with an equity focus and do not present as barriers to applying, increase the applicant pool by funding creative outreach approaches, support departmental and institutional climate by focusing on techniques that reduce unconscious bias, and supporting professional development through partnership with other units in the college and external organizations⁵.

² Jasmín D. Llamas, Khoa Nguyen & Alisia G.T.T. Tran (2019): The case for greater faculty diversity: examining the educational impacts of student-faculty racial/ethnic match, *Race Ethnicity and Education*.

³ From the Employee Data Fall Demographic Factsheet for Ethnicity for Fall 2019.

⁴ From the Foothill College Headcount Demographic Fact Sheet for Fall 2019.

⁵ Leana Golubchik and Mallory Redel (2018): Diversity in Faculty Recruiting: A WiSE Approach, Abstracts of the 2018 ACM International Conference on Measurement and Modeling of Computer Systems.

5. Outreach to Black & African American Students

Foothill College must have academic check-ins with Black and African American students quarterly– not just those in the Umoja program. In addition to neighboring high school districts with a large population of Black and African American students, Foothill College must also outreach to Black and African American students at schools within/nearby the Foothill-De Anza service area, such as schools in the: Fremont Union High School District, Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District, Palo Alto Unified School District, Campbell Union High School District, and San Mateo Union High School District. A concerted effort must be made to reach out to Black Student Unions, African American Student Unions, and similar student organizations at these aforementioned schools with the goal of equipping students and families with the information needed to successfully enter college and excel.

6. Supporting Indigenous & Native Students and Communities

Foothill College must go beyond simply acknowledging the Indigenous land that houses our campus by challenging itself to move away from encouraging acts that are performative, into commitments of transformative change. To do this, Foothill College must:

1. Return institutional land back to Native nations.
2. If institutional land cannot be returned to Native nations, Foothill College must:
 - a. Provide tuition assistance/financial aid to Native students on their traditional homelands as landbased reparations⁶.
 - b. Create a support program and space for Indigenous and Native American students.
 - c. Do a better job of outreaching to Indigenous/Native American prospective students and providing them with the resources they need to thrive if they choose to attend.

Foothill College must also use its platform as an institution of higher education to openly advocate for Native and Indigenous rights as well as build community relationships with local Native nations to engage in the healing process as a perpetrator of colonialism.

7. Mental Health

Faculty, staff, and administration must commit to leading with compassion and trauma-informed principles. Mental health services must also be expanded and transformed to be trauma-informed and cater to BIPOC students through professional development, inclusive promotion, and hiring a BIPOC therapist (with priority given to Black and Indigenous applicants). Instructors must also include content and trigger warnings in their syllabi/course material⁷.

⁶ Megan Red Shirt-Shaw (2020): Beyond the Land Acknowledgement: College “LAND BACK” or Free Tuition for Native Students.

⁷ Resource developed, framed, and hosted by the LSA Inclusive Teaching Initiative, University of Michigan (<http://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/>).

8. Basic Needs

Students deserve an equitable and just chance at success, regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, disability, nationality, and/or age. Basic needs are a fundamental right for all students, as they provide students with the foundation needed in order to overcome socioeconomic obstacles and achieve success at Foothill College.

A cultural shift at Foothill College that prioritizes access and availability of basic needs such as affordable housing, food, mental health resources, reliable internet, and technology is needed. Programs must be created to support these needs, and current programs that address these needs must be improved in order to ensure that all students are not only aware of these resources, but also are able to access these resources.

9. Financial Literacy

Foothill College, as an educational institution, has the opportunity to ensure that students are financially literate. Foothill College must include information on financial literacy not only in business/economic classes, but throughout all departments. Financial literacy must also be embedded as a topic covered in all student support programs and services, as well as in outreach efforts. Foothill College must also provide classroom presentations, workshops, speakers, and other events on financial literacy, with a special focus on outreach to BIPOC and low-income students.

When assessing financial literacy and its intersection with race, cultural capital and self-advocacy should not be seen as limiting factors; in other words, BIPOC students should not be perceived as unknowledgeable or uneducated. Instead, a critical race theory framework must be adopted in outreach practices, workshops, and pedagogy for financial literacy. Community cultural wealth⁸ must be leveraged, and deficit thinking must be discouraged.

10. Reimagining Campus Safety

Campus police threaten the safety of Black and Latinx students and thus the success of Black and Latinx students. Anecdotally, Black students have been deterred from attending Foothill College due to campus police presence, and Black alumni do not recommend Foothill College to their Black peers partly due to police presence.

A popular solution to the issue of policing is improving relationships between the police and the community, also known as community policing; however, this is an ineffective model as it still keeps the racist institution of the police intact. It is not fair to expect Black students to trust the police, as generations of trauma from police violence against the Black community has effectively severed this trust.

⁸ Tara J. Yosso (2005): Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth, *Race Ethnicity and Education*.

Therefore, we do not want or need to explore community policing or invest more funding to improve an irreparable partnership. Instead, campus safety must be reimaged by defunding and dismantling our police force as they have no place on our campus and institution. In other words, to reimagine campus safety is to ensure that students of all races feel safe at Foothill College.

If Foothill College wants to truly uphold its equity agenda, the college must create **structural** change by advocating for the defunding and dismantling of our police force as well as intentionally researching and recommending alternate models to police and creating a new model of campus safety that ensures the safety of Black and Latinx students.

We recognize that this is part of a larger conversation and invite faculty, staff, and administration to engage with us as well as other student groups working on this effort.

11. Observing Juneteenth

Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States. Though the Emancipation Proclamation was passed by President Abraham Lincoln in January 1865, it wasn't until June 19th, 1865 that Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced the emancipation of the last remaining enslaved people in the country⁹.

Therefore, Foothill College must observe Juneteenth (June 19th) as a paid holiday. This would ensure it is not just a cultural observance, but given the same credit and significance as we do with any other holiday. Administrators, faculty, and staff of Foothill College must advocate for this at a District level and with the appropriate bargaining units.

12. Student Activism

Students should be able to engage in nonviolent protest to support social justice movements (such as Black Lives Matter) in all athletic contests without penalty. Student athletes and students in the sports medicine program that engage in any form of nonviolent protest during an athletic competition, either at a home or away event, shall not be penalized and have the full support of the campus with no consequences for their actions. If students choose to share with coaches or other athletics staff that they will engage in any form of nonviolent protest and are penalized in any way, this demand will be violated. Athletes, if they choose to do so, must also be allowed to display names of those they wish to bring attention to and/or phrases in support of a movement on their uniforms and/or shirts.

Furthermore, a more robust record of Foothill College's history of student activism must be highlighted and circulated to administrators, faculty, staff, the student body, and the greater Foothill community.

⁹ Mountain View Voice (2020): Santa Clara County first in state to make Juneteenth a paid holiday.

ACTION REQUIRED: RESPONSE

With the aforementioned delineation of our demands and to show that we are being heard and acted upon, we are asking for a public, comprehensive response to all 12 of our demands from each Foothill College governance council and constituency senate (College Advisory Council, Community & Communication Council, Equity & Education Council, Revenue & Resources Council, Academic Senate, and Classified Senate) by December 11th, 2020.

A lack of response to any demand demonstrates a lack of care about that demand. For any of the demands that are outside of Foothill College's jurisdiction, Foothill College must pledge to make recommendations to the District on behalf of the student demands and work with the District to advocate for these student demands at a District level.

These demands should take priority in governance discussions throughout the year. We recognize that many of these demands will take time and thus require accountability, as Foothill College has historically let student demands fade into the background. Many of the demands we are asking for are demands that have not been met for 50 years, and we do not want history to repeat itself. Therefore, the response must include specific deadlines, an overall timeline, action items, and assign people responsible for/to oversee these items in order to ensure that words will be propelled into action. We also hope that these demands will be reflected in the Equity Plan 2.0 and the following Action Plan, as well as future governance discussions and college proceedings.

Thank you all for your leadership and time. Please contact us with any questions or comments.

In Solidarity,

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