

Dear President Valerie Smith, Swarthmore Board of Managers, Vice President of Student Affairs Jim Terhune, and Dean of Students Tomoko Sakomura,

We would like to first acknowledge that Swarthmore College resides and operates on stolen land from the Lenni Lenape. With this acknowledgement of the stolen Lenni Lenape land, we also bear witness to Swarthmore College's longstanding history of racism, violence and continual oppression of Indigenous people. We recognize that our fight for Black wellness and safety at Swarthmore is happening on desecrated land, which means we are also implicated in the violence that the College enacts against Indigenous peoples. It is not acceptable to offer empty condolences without a concrete plan for reparations. Let us be clear: we are fully committed to creating a future where Native people everywhere get their Land Back. One notable action step the college can take towards this goal is to give tangible, specific measures of autonomy for how the institution's land and capital is delegated in accordance to the needs of Indigenous communities whose unceded land the college resides on.

On October 29, 2020, students at Haverford College began striking in response to the egregious email sent by their president following the murder of Philadelphia's Walter Wallace Jr. Additionally, on Nov. 3, 2020 students from Bryn Mawr College began to strike in solidarity with Haverford. Racism, microaggressions, neglect, and white supremacy are not unique experiences to those institutions. Black people are being subjugated by the American settler colonial project everywhere. It is inescapable.

On October 29, 2020, in an email entitled "Our system is broken," President Valerie Smith stated "...Black lives seem to be expendable." The system is not broken; it was founded on the exploitation of Black people and the genocide and erasure of Indigenous people. Without a fundamental understanding of the beginnings of our country, it is no surprise that Swarthmore has continued to be complicit in violence against Black and Indigenous people. Swarthmore College acknowledges racial violence, but operates as if this violence exists in a vacuum by not committing to tangible anti-racist plans of action.

The transition to remote schooling has only amplified the impact of institutional anti-blackness at Swarthmore College. From the moment that Swarthmore College began admitting Black students in the 1960s, it has neglected and participated in the continual oppression of this portion of its student body. Like the Black Swarthmore students of the '60s, whose anger at the lack of support for Black students on campus led to the establishment of the BCC and the Black Studies Program, we are no longer waiting for Swarthmore to decide whether it will give us the resources we need. We are organizing to demand them for ourselves.

DEMANDS

- I. **We demand that there be no punitive actions and/or repercussions for the students involved, whatsoever. This includes BiCo students from Haverford and Bryn Mawr currently taking Swarthmore courses.** This includes the guarantee that no student will fail this semester, fail to receive credit, or be hindered from completing their degree plan in any way, as a result of any involvement with this organizing. Swarthmore College is an institution which prides itself on cultivating students who are socially and politically involved. This demand is an opportunity for the College to support the very same social and political engagement it encourages.
- II. **In alignment with the demands of Bi-Co students, we demand that Swarthmore recognize, credit, and financially compensate the Black and Brown, gender-oppressed, and FLI people involved in the creation of this open letter and demands.**

On Indigenous Peoples:

- I. **We demand that Swarthmore provide a concrete plan of action for each and every one of the [Demands Laid Out by Swarthmore Indigenous Students Association](#).** These demands were made in 2017 and still have not been appropriately addressed.
 - A. **In alignment with the demands of Haverford students, we demand that Swarthmore College actively recruit more Indigenous students.** The student population at Swarthmore is currently <1% American Indian/Native Alaskan. Additionally, the College has no Indigenous Studies courses or Indigenous faculty, and inadequate support of its few Indigenous students. This is unacceptable considering Swarthmore's financial capability for more expansive admissions outreach in addition to the College's occupation of stolen land. Meeting this demand allows the college an opportunity to address the ways it has been complicit in the violence of anti-Indigeneity by making land acknowledgements without committing to a plan which prioritizes Land Back.
 - B. **We demand an Indigenous students scholarship fund. This scholarship fund would be utilized exclusively by Indigenous students for financial aid, funding campus and community initiatives, and for any other purposes that Indigenous students deem necessary.**

On Disabled and Neurodivergent Students:

- I. **In alignment with the demands of Bi-Co students, we demand that Swarthmore address its ableism by implementing policies and plans of action which effectively support disabled and neurodivergent people.** The College's "Welcome to Student Disability Services" states that: "An accommodation is not considered reasonable if it fundamentally alters the essential elements of an academic program." This is inherently

ableist. The structure of an academic program should not prevent a student from receiving the necessary accommodations to ensure their wellness and academic success. Thus, **we demand that**

- A. Swarthmore establishes a process for disability accommodations which centers student wellness rather than the structure of academic programs.**
- B. Professors who refuse to provide the accommodations students require must face institutional repercussions.**
- C. All Swarthmore virtual classes cannot require students to keep their cameras on for the duration of class.**
- D. Swarthmore implements mandatory training for professors about common learning disabilities.**

On Undocumented Students:

- I. We demand that Swarthmore hold a first-year/transfer orientation solely dedicated to Undocumented/DACA students.** Currently, these students are invited to international orientation and many of the activities and resources discussed do not address their specific needs. The first of these orientations must occur in the Fall of 2021.
- II. Swarthmore's student employment office must give all Undocumented/DACA students who are eligible to work the same priority access to on-campus jobs through JobX given to work-aided students.**

Although these students are not eligible for federal funding and therefore are not given work-study priority, many are first-generation/low-income and still require campus employment to cover tuition costs and living expenses.

On Staff:

- I. We demand that Swarthmore extend hazard pay to its staff until the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.** The majority of these staff members are Black, and Black people have the highest COVID-19 mortality rate.

On Financial Aid:

- I. We demand that international students on financial aid receive the full living allowance of \$3000 in US dollars, without adjustments according to the countries in which they reside for the duration of the pandemic.**
- II. We demand that financial aid packages better accommodate remote students' financial circumstances.** The COVID-19 pandemic necessitates new ways of assessing the financial aspects of a student's living conditions. The college must use its available financial resources to accommodate students specific circumstances, rather than simply asking them to adapt.

- III. **We demand an audit of the Financial Aid Department by an independent institution to investigate the ways BIPOC are treated in comparison to their white counterparts. We demand the results of this audit are shared with the Swarthmore community and any discrimination from the financial aid department be met with severe repercussions.** In comparison to white students receiving financial aid, a disproportionate amount of BIPOC have faced hostile treatment from the Financial Aid Department. Whether through antagonistic communication or the receipt of unsatisfactory financial aid packages, complaints about the Financial Aid Department are widespread among BIPOC.
- A. **We demand that any financial aid decisions made pertaining to international students be audited by an independent institution with factual, current knowledge of each country's respective economic and socio-political situation.**

On College Departments and Course Materials:

- III. **We demand that Swarthmore faculty across every department incorporate and center the work of Black, Indigenous, Disabled, and Queer writers, scientists, and activists beginning with the 2021-2022 Academic year.**
- For too long, the syllabi of Swarthmore faculty have been Eurocentric, and have erased the contributions of disabled, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ communities. **We demand that the revised syllabi of Swarthmore faculty be looked over by a committee of LGBTQ+, BIPOC, and disabled students who will be financially compensated for their labor.**
- IV. **We demand that Swarthmore redirect all of the President's Fund For Racial Justice Funds to Black organizations in Chester and Philadelphia already doing antiracist work.** These organizations include but are not limited to: Black Philly Radical Collective, the Chester Education Foundation, and the Philadelphia Community Bail Fund.
- V. **We demand that Swarthmore establish a Black Studies Department with a Black Department Chair by the 2021-2022 School Year. In addition, we demand that 2 tenure track positions be added to the department over the next 3 years. We demand that the hiring process be spearheaded and finalized by Black faculty and students, who will be financially compensated for their labor.**

On Swarthmore's Spring 2020 Calendar and Future Semesters:

- VI. **We demand that at least a week of break be incorporated into the Spring 2021 calendar and for every consecutive remote semester during the COVID-19 Pandemic.** This will require faculty to adjust their pedagogy and curriculums in order to accommodate students. The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent transition to remote schooling necessitates these adjustments at an academic institution.

On Mental Health Resources:

I. We demand that CAPs better aid and support students of marginalized identities.

This should include:

- A.** An increase in the number of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC CAPS therapists to at least six. This can happen in a span of 4 years: one new therapist by the 2021-2022 school year, two more within the year after, and three more in the next two years.
 - 1.** These therapists should be professional hires who have finished their training and have clinical degrees.
- B.** Allocate a portion of the reservation slots with said therapists to LGBTQ+ and BIPOC students. Counselors of these identities provide students with inclusive and culturally competent support on the systemic issues that they face daily at a historically predominantly white institution.

On Public Safety:

- I. We demand that Swarthmore College reduces its Public Safety officer workforce over the next two years. We demand that funding from those vacated positions be re-allocated to CAPS for the hiring of new counselors as aforementioned.**

Public Safety is not in the service of protecting Black students, who are frequently stopped and asked what their business is on campus. Pubsafe is not an essential service. Counseling for Black students, for whom this political and historical moment is incredibly traumatic, is essential and funds should be reallocated accordingly.

On Academic Expectations:

- I. We demand that all academic expectations are significantly modified to meet the needs of the most marginalized students.** Beginning with the Spring of 2021, all coursework deadlines should be adjusted to prioritize student wellness. This will require professors to rework their syllabi in order to meet the needs of the students that are struggling the most in their courses. It is violent to expect students to disregard their well being in order to meet academic expectations.
- II. We demand that Swarthmore fully fund workshops on cultural competency and intersectionality that are *mandatory* for all first-year and transfer students beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.** These workshops should be taught by marginalized people. Too many of our peers are able to graduate without having to reflect on systems of oppression and how they are implicated within them.
- III. We demand Black faculty are properly credited and compensated in times of injustice and unrest when this institution demands from them additional emotional labor and expertise.**

IN CONCLUSION

To quote The Bryn Mawr Strike Collective, “This is not an exhaustive list to address the historic and current systemic marginalization and oppression of BIPOC, QTPOC, FGLI [the equivalent of FLI], disabled BIPOC, undocumented BIPOC, and international BIPOC as well as other underserved and underrepresented communities.” If Swarthmore College fails to adequately address this letter and provide us with their plan of action to implement these demands by November 16th, 2020 at 9 am EST, the Black Affinity Coalition and our allies, following in the footsteps of SASS’ 1969 demands, “will be forced to do whatever is necessary to obtain acceptance” of our demands.

In Rage and In Solidarity,
Black Affinity Coalition