

UIC Student Demands 8/21/20, 10(13 AM

Thank you for signing on to this letter of demands!

In the spirit of the week of Juneteenth 2020, we submitted this letter of demands to the UIC and U of I System Administration on Monday, June 15th.

6/8/2020

To President Timothy L. Killeen, UIC Chancellor Michael D.

Amiridis, the University of Illinois at Chicago Board of

Trustees, UIC Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Susan Poser, Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs

Robert Barish, and UIC Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs J.

Rex Tolliver,

This letter addresses the concerns and demands of

undergraduate and graduate students and organizations at the University of Illinois at Chicago; related to UIC and the University of Illinois System's lack of effort and response in light of police violence.

As one of the largest public institutions in the nation serving a majority Black and Brown commuter student demographic located on the Southwest side of Chicago, UIC has a moral obligation and responsibility to respond to the escalating anti-Black violence that has been unfolding in the City of Chicago for several years now, and that has plagued the city since its inception. Furthermore, it has a duty to respond to the broader anti-Black violence and racism ravaging our country, which also specifically afflicts UIC's Black students and students of color more generally.

Over the course of the last two weeks, we have witnessed national and international outcry over the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Dreasjon Reed, Tony

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McDade, Ahmaud Arbery, David McAtee, Rayshard Brooks, and Priscilla Slater. These are just some of the names of Black people we have lost recently who have been killed by the police and white vigilantes. It does not include the names of Black people who have been brutally beaten by police with batons, bitten by police dogs, and have lost their life protesting a persistent injustice that is compounded by the complicit silence of institutions that refuse to take a clear stand against anti-Black racism and racist police violence. This kind of anti-Black racism and racist policing is rooted in a long history of police violence that uniquely impacts all Black people in the United States, as well as globally, and threatens their lives.

As African American Studies scholar Kihana Miraya Ross wrote in her New York Times op-ed, "Anti-blackness

describes the inability to recognize black humanity. It

captures the reality that the kind of violence that saturates black life is not based on any specific thing a black person -better described as 'a person who has been racialized black'- did. The violence we experience isn't tied to any particular transgression. It's gratuitous and unrelenting." The current uprisings around the country and even around the world have refocused attention on the need to make

#BlackLivesMatter, and have reignited the call to eradicate the oppressions that threaten Black life. To be sure, people of color and Indigenous peoples also experience the brutality of racist policing on and off campus. However, we want to acknowledge the unique ways in which institutional racism and racist policing impact Black people.

Through rallies, protests, and city-wide marches, UIC

students, faculty, and alumni have been a part of and leading these fights, as we have watched our communities continue to experience violence from the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Just last week, a Black woman in Belmont

Cragin/Hermosa was pulled from her car with guns raised at her, dragged, and pinned down by her neck by CPD - all because she was trying to run errands with her family. In Lincoln Park, a CPD officer gave the middle finger to

protesters calling for justice for George Floyd, in a long list of over 250 complaints filed against CPD in just one day.

To date, UIC and the University of Illinois System has failed to release a statement condemning anti-Black violence and racist policing, and has failed to release an action plan that demonstrates a willingness to invest in its Black students.

Furthermore, it has failed to ensure that the institution is

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making clear efforts to end patterns and practices of inequity and institutionalized racism on campus that impact the lives of its Black students.

In an email to the University of Illinois System on May 31, 2020, President Tim Killeen noted that after seeing the image of George Floyd being suffocated by police officers that, "We hope that it will be the one that finally steers us onto a path of real change." But, it is not enough to hope. Hope must be met by institutional change and that change begins by listening to and implementing the demands of its students.

We, undergraduate and graduate students and

organizations at the University of Illinois at Chicago, come together to call for UIC to commit & invest in students and divest from the police (UIC Police, CPD, and private security agencies), in order to bring real change.

Divest

We call on UIC and the University of Illinois System to divest from UIC Police, Chicago Police Department (CPD), and private security agencies in the following ways:

1. Immediately cut ALL ties with CPD. This includes:
 - a. End ALL UIC Police training with CPD.
 - b. End ALL data sharing agreements.
2. Immediately disarm UIC Police.
3. Immediately decrease the UIC Police budget by 75% in the 2020-2021 school year.

4. End the use of Law Enforcement Agencies Data

System (LEADS) and other nationwide law enforcement data sharing by UIC Police. Systems like LEADS and other surveillance systems only participate in tracking and monitoring students and community members, and we call for a complete end to their use.

5. End police patrols by UIC Police, CPD, and private security agencies inside of UIC buildings.

6. End “behavioral threat assessment” teams that include UIC Police and CPD.

7. End the “suspect” descriptions in campus-wide crime alerts sent from UIC Police, including the Public

Safety Advisory text messages and emails sent to UIC students, staff, and faculty (i.e. naming an ominous “black male in a hoodie”). These alerts only perpetuate anti-Black racism, and we call for a complete end to them.

8. End UIC Police and CPD led “campus safety”

UIC Student Demands training for faculty and staff. Updated automatically every 5 minutes

9. End any funding and program commitments to the following programs and faculty projects:

a. ALL activities related to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA).

b. ALL activities related to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). Alternatively, support the

stop CVE campaign at UIC - especially as these projects fund research that racially profiles, surveils, and criminalizes Muslim community members, including Muslim students, as well as protesters.

c. ALL activities related to “Black Identity Extremism” (BIE) - especially as these projects promote anti-Black racism and surveil Black people, including Black students and activists, which route young people into further surveillance and criminalizing databases.

Commit & Invest

We call on UIC to commit and invest in its Black students, and the UIC community in the following ways:

1. Host campus wide calls/town halls to hear concerns from students, every semester.
2. Every semester, host community/student-wide conversations on topics such as: racism, anti-Blackness, implicit bias, racial solidarity between communities, misogyny, ableism, LGBTQ+ issues, ageism, classism, and other issues driven by students and faculty.
3. Require mandatory general education courses on structural racism and dismantling whiteness for all students.
4. Provide yearly in-person training for faculty and staff that focus on alternatives to calling the police, as well as written (pamphlets, leaflets, and other

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materials) and electronic materials on departmental websites with the same information.

5. Develop a student and faculty run board to review UIC Police responses to incidents. We demand that this board be elected by Black, Brown, Indigenous, Arab, Muslim, undocumented, disabled, queer, gender nonconforming, trans, and students of color campus leadership.

6. Hire more staff in the Campus Advocacy Network (CAN) to build more capacity to provide the confidential, anonymous, and free services to UIC students, staff and faculty that CAN offers.

a. As one of these hires, immediately hire

a Transformative Justice Coordinator to be

housed in the Campus Advocacy Network, to

support in educating UIC students, staff and

faculty on alternatives to calling the police and

ways to address harm and violence that do not

rely on the criminal punishment system, which

perpetuates harm and violence. We demand

that this hire be made during the 2020-2021

school year.

7. Provide a detailed plan of support for Black

students at all levels that includes:

a. Hiring of at least 3 more full-time Black

therapists in the counseling center who are affirming in their therapeutic practice with

LGBTQ+ students, international students, and students with disabilities. And, provide all

counselors/therapists with the capabilities to hold telehealth therapy, on an as needed basis.

b. Develop a system for long-term individual

and concurrent individual therapy that includes

sliding scale payment options for students.

This system must include a training program

for graduate students studying to become

therapists/counselors to provide sliding scale therapy to the UIC community, and rigorous recruitment of Black and Brown students to the following UIC Departments – Psychology, Psychiatry, Social Work, and other related departments.

c. Permanent funding for organizations whose mission is for the betterment of Black students

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(for example Black Student Union [BSU] and Black Graduate Student Association [BGSA]).

d. Increased funding and scholarships for Black, Indigenous, and international students, who are the most underrepresented students on campus; including for low-income students.

e. Significantly decrease the cost of student housing, prioritizing the housing needs of low-income students.

f. Fully fund a yearly forum specifically for Black students & faculty to learn about academic interests and scholarly work.

g. Require every graduate department to make the criteria by which graduate students are evaluated completely transparent. And, to make the results of student evaluations

available to individual graduate students themselves. Lastly, require that any graduate students in “poor standing” be notified immediately and be a part of a process for support and improvement.

8. Increase the hiring and retention of Black faculty in ALL departments.

9. Provide a detailed plan of support for faculty members at all levels that includes:

- a. Yearly training for faculty on anti-Blackness,
- b. Immediately provide a specific allocation of in all departments.

dismantling whiteness, and structural racism. resources to hire more Black faculty members

c. Develop programs driven by the needs and concerns of Black faculty members, in order to support and retain them.

10. Fully fund and support a symposium led by Black students, community organizers, and faculty to discuss local, national, and international work on power and privilege, alternatives to policing, and abolition.

11. Host a yearly memorial service led by Black, Brown, Indigenous, queer, gender nonconforming, trans, and community members of color for these communities.

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12. Fund the construction of sculptures on and around campus (curated by Black, Brown, Indigenous, and people of color artists) to commemorate the experiences of Black, Brown,

Indigenous, and people of color communities in the City of Chicago; especially Indigenous peoples whose land has been colonized through violence and theft in order to build the City of Chicago, as well as those who have been displaced by the expansion and

gentrification of UIC's campus.

a. We demand that the people and experiences

reflected in these sculptures be selected

through a process that students and faculty

have the opportunity to vote on.

13. Develop a transparent process for students

wishing to provide University administrators with crucial feedback and for accountability purposes from student groups on campus to University

administrators.

a. Including clarifying the role of the

Chancellor's Committee on the Status of

Blacks (CCSB) and providing a process for

feedback from Black students and Black faculty

on CCSB's work with the purpose of supporting

the academic, professional, cultural, and social

well-being of Black students and faculty.

14. Rename academic buildings that elevate the names of racist, sexist, homophobic, and xenophobic politicians, and leaders. Rename these buildings based on a selection process that students and

faculty have the opportunity to vote on.

a. Jefferson Hall is named after 3rd U.S.

President Thomas Jefferson who owned

enslaved people of African descent.

b. Taylor Street Building is named after 12th

U.S. President Zachary Taylor who owned

enslaved people of African descent and

participated in colonizing Mexico on behalf of
the U.S. through the Mexican-American War.

In addition, we demand that UIC and the University of Illinois System make substantial donations to the following local organizations who are working to end state violence (including police violence) in order to make systemic changes in the lives of

Black people and Black communities. These

organizations include: Black Lives Matter Chicago, Assata's Daughters, Brave Space Alliance, BYP100 -Chicago Chapter, Chicago Equity and Transformation, Southsiders Organized for Unity and Liberation, and the Chicago Community Bond Fund.

Closing

At the heart of it, divesting from policing (including UIC Police, CPD, and private security agencies) is an issue of systemic racism and gender violence. Students at UIC and in the broader Chicago community are not made "safer" by the presence of UIC Police, CPD, and private security agencies on our campus and in our communities.

In the City of Chicago, Rekia Boyd, Laquan McDonald, Bettie Jones, Quintonio LeGrier, and countless other Black people have been murdered by CPD. Continued collaboration with CPD by UIC and the University of Illinois System threatens the lives of Black, Brown, Indigenous, Arab, Muslim, undocumented, disabled, queer, gender nonconforming, trans, and people of color on our campus and further puts us in unique positions of harm and violence; and puts all people on our campus in harm's way as well.

In an email to the UIC community on May 29, 2020, several members of UIC's leadership (who this letter is addressed to) stated that, "we are committed to

addressing the deep systemic injustice of racism". With the subpar response thus far from UIC and the

University of Illinois System about this current iteration of murders of Black people by police, it appears to us that UIC and the University of Illinois System has no plan in mind to express commitments to Black students specifically, and to the UIC and broader Chicago

community as a whole. Therefore, we issue this list of demands generated by undergraduate and graduate students and organizations at the

University of Illinois at Chicago as an immediate call to action. We issue a call to divest from UIC

Police, CPD, and private security agencies, and to commit and invest to students of the UIC community.

This letter also continues a history of efforts led by Black students and the larger Chicago community to improve life on our campus. In 1968, Black students led a sit-in in University Hall after University police attacked a Black student in a coat room. In the 1960s and 1970s, student-led movements paved the way for African American Studies and Black Studies

departments across the U.S., including at UIC. After several incidents of violence and harassment against Black students in the 1990s, members of the Black Students Organization for Communication successfully renewed calls for creating UIC's African-American Cultural Center. Present day, members of the Chicago Health Coalition for Black Lives are calling for

disbanding campus police and working to defund CPD by cutting all ties and contracts with them to make our hospitals, clinics, and university campuses police-free zones, which includes demands for UIC's campus.

Members of the Black Students Law Association of UIC John Marshall Law School have also submitted a letter to the Dean, that several student organizations have signed, calling for advancing equity for Black law students. Decades of student led demonstrations, sit-ins, kiss-ins, and protests by many groups of students are also awoken within this letter.

We also issue these demands in solidarity with

students, faculty, and alumni from all across the

country who call for cities and institutions of higher education to divest from policing. In 2015, Black

Liberation Collective- composed of Black students from all across the country - issued lists of demands to 86 institutions to address widespread institutional

inequity and anti-Black racism. In 2018, students at the University of Chicago demanded major changes to the University of Chicago Police Department (UCPD) -including disarming UCPD - after UCPD shot a student named Charles Thomas who was experiencing a

mental health crisis; and ignited the call for

#CareNotCops to demand more mental health

resources for University of Chicago students and

broader community members. Simultaneously, young people organizing with the #NoCopAcademy

campaign have been demanding that the City of

Chicago disinvest from policing and stop construction on a \$95 million dollar police academy, and instead invest in schools, housing, and community. Last month,

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the University of Minnesota (UMN) announced that it will end contracts with the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) after the UMN Undergraduate

Student Body President issued a letter to the

administration, following the murder of George Floyd by the MPD. And this week, the Minneapolis City

Council vowed to disband the police department citing that, "In Minneapolis and in cities across the US, it is clear that our system of policing is not keeping our communities safe". And right now, members of

the Chicago Teachers Union are supporting Chicago Public School (CPS) students, teachers, and families in their demands to have CPS divest/remove CPD from schools and invest in nurses, trauma services, and restorative justice programming in order for students to have #PoliceFreeSchools.

We hope that you, as leadership of UIC and the University of Illinois System, will support us by following through with this call to action that provides real change in the lives of

students at UIC.