

Re: Letter from SAIC Black Faculty

Received:  Tuesday, July 7, 2020 5:54 PM

From: Elissa Tenny etenny@artic.edu

To: saicblackfutures@protonmail.com

CC: mberger@artic.edu mberger@artic.edu

Dear faculty, staff, students, alums, and allies,

Thank you for sharing the Letter from SAIC Black Faculty last night. We held a meeting of the President's Cabinet this morning to share your demands and concerns and we are carefully considering each point raised. We will be back in touch early next week with first steps to address your concerns. In the meantime, if any of you are interested in having a conversation with either or both of us, we are open to scheduling a meeting.

Elissa and Martin

On Mon, Jul 6, 2020 at 6:01 PM SAIC BLACK FUTURES <saicblackfutures@protonmail.com> wrote:
Letter from SAIC Black Faculty

Sent with [ProtonMail](#) Secure Email.

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Elissa Tenny
President



School of the Art Institute of Chicago
37 S. Wabash Ave., 8th floor
Chicago, IL 60603
312.899.1452

Re: Letter from SAIC Black Faculty

Received: Tuesday, July 14, 2020 5:41 PM

From: Elissa Tenny etenny@saic.edu

To: SAIC BLACK FUTURES saicblackfutures@protonmail.com

CC: mberger@artic.edu mberger@artic.edu

Dear faculty, staff, students, alums, and allies,

Thank you, again, for your letter of Monday, July 6, and for granting us the time to begin considering your demands and concerns, a process that is ongoing. As a next step in making SAIC, to paraphrase your letter, a decisive part in the making of the coming world of the future, I want to share with you the following actions that we are undertaking immediately:

Tuition Increase Offset for Students with Greatest Financial Need—While SAIC is not in a financial position to completely offset the planned tuition increase for the 2020–21 academic year, the School will award a grant—i.e., an automatic, no-strings-attached adjustment to each student’s bill that does not need to be repaid—for all students eligible for a Pell Grant, the federal program for students who display exceptional financial need. This will eliminate the tuition increase for 22% of the student body.

\$1 Million Investment in Chicago Scholars Programs—A recent gift from Carol and David Ostrow will create an endowed named, need-based scholarship opportunity for graduates from the Chicago area high schools’ student population matriculating to SAIC, which is approximately 89 percent students of color. The first cohort of scholarship recipients will be awarded by the 2021–22 academic year.

Undergraduate Scholarship Named for Lynika Strozier—Named in honor of beloved colleague Lynika Strozier who passed away from complications due to COVID-19, this full-tuition, need-based scholarship will go to support an undergraduate student matriculating from Chicago area high schools beginning in the 2020–21 academic year.

We will shortly announce these steps to the campus community. We will also continue to consider the other ideas you have advanced and will write to you with future updates by the end of July. In particular we are currently exploring:

- Fundraising opportunities and partnerships to fund scholarship opportunities for graduate students
- Working with the offices of student affairs and IRFM to explore the potential for student-run, affinity group space
- We will also offer to provide support and resources for *The Homeplace: A Healing Space for Black Creatives*, a space—currently virtual, with aspirations to become physical—where Black community members can congregate for support and fellowship. This project—situated in the Wellness Center and inspired by a concept developed by bell hooks—was introduced to SAIC by postdoctoral fellow Dr. Kenneth Washington and Mental Health Promotion Specialist Teresa Sit. We are eager to learn from them how the School can deepen its support for the initiative and ensure that it thrives long term.

In your letter, there were a few assumptions that we believe aren't accurate or are easily rectified, and we would like to offer these clarifications:

- As a newly appointed member of the president's cabinet, the director of diversity, equity, and inclusion will attend all board of governors meetings and is encouraged to establish regular meetings with legal counsel. We pledge to support incoming Director Jefferson Pinder in making these connections.
- While we did model a range of potential budget scenarios, we do not expect “to lose 50–75% of usual tuition income” and we will continue to do everything in our power to avoid “several rounds of layoffs.” We know how traumatic the recent workforce reduction has been for our community, but the projected budget losses we have shared to date are our most accurate assessment we have at this time.

- We would welcome hearing more about your critique of our projects at Homan Square beyond budgetary concerns, as we believe we have made a significant commitment of institutional resources to our work with communities and partners in North Lawndale. Since 2014, the School has dedicated approximately \$470,000 to this work annually, of which an average of \$150,000 comes from philanthropic support each year through the Office of Advancement. Our work in North Lawndale continues to be a funding priority for the Office of the President.

Finally, the offer from our prior email still stands, and we remain open to meeting with any of you—individually or as a full or representative group—interested in speaking with either or both of us.

Thank you for your concern and effort in bringing these issues to our attention. We, too, want to make the current and future School of the Art Institute of Chicago more just, inclusive, and anti-racist. We pledge to work with you to resolve as many of these issues as we can and are eager to continue this work together.

Elissa and Martin

On Fri, Jul 10, 2020 at 12:14 PM SAIC BLACK FUTURES <saicblackfutures@protonmail.com> wrote:

Elissa and Martin:

We also acknowledge receipt of your email. We will await your response to the 30 day demands.

Sent with [ProtonMail](#) Secure Email.

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On Tuesday, July 7, 2020 5:54 PM, Elissa Tenny <etenny@artic.edu> wrote:

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School of the Art Institute of Chicago
37 S. Wabash Ave., 8th floor
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Re: Letter from SAIC Black Faculty

Received: Saturday, July 18, 2020 2:44 PM

From: SAIC BLACK FUTURES saicblackfutures@protonmail.com

To: Elissa Tenny etenny@saic.edu

CC:

BCC: saicblackfutures@protonmail.com saicblackfutures@protonmail.com

We have received an acknowledgment email and a second detailed reply to our demands from Elissa and Martin. We have noted several inaccurate assumptions and discrepancies. The approaches that were enumerated are inadequate proposals to serious issues. The overall response is misaligned with the urgency of these demands for immediate action and embodies the lack of sincere attention we are calling for. This detached sympathy is a harmful way to do business.

We advise the administration to reconsider our demands. We made 27 demands and 7 additional suggested actions. Elissa and Martin's letter has only, and insufficiently, addressed 6 of the demands. Furthermore, it has come to our attention that DEI-related efforts currently underway continue to be led by administrators who have yet to account for their structural acts of violence against this community. Again, we call for the resignation of all parties complicit in prolonged inaction and/or negligence on related issues.

We intend to reiterate in further detail each of the points that were made in the demands. We will continue to hold the administration accountable until acceptable solutions are agreed upon. In regards to any future invitations to meetings with Elissa and Martin, we will specifically identify the terms and the parties present.

Sincere regards,
SAIC Black Futures

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