

June 29th, 2020

To: **Elissa Tenny**

President of School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Rose Milkowski

Vice President of Enrollment Management

Jefferson Pinder

Interim Dean of Faculty and Vice President of Academic Affairs

Additional School of the Art Institute of Chicago Leadership

In response to the organizing efforts and demands of our students, we submit the following list of adjacent demands. For immediate action, we request:

1. Listening and responding to students' demands with respect and due diligence
2. Establish and schedule a series of meetings with Elissa Tenny (SAIC President), Rose Milkowski (Vice President of Enrollment Management), and Jefferson Pinder (Interim Dean of Faculty and Vice President of Academic Affairs) with Student and Counselor delegates. Meeting details should be agreed upon by July 1st (with additional results-based meetings on a consistent schedule), and a first meeting should take place by July 10th.

We, the undersigned, support our student ambassadors' demands that leadership address racism and unethical workplace practices at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In support of our student workers, we demand time and space with SAIC's leadership to discuss how the institution is failing to prioritize equity, diversity, and the public good in its admissions practices and workplace culture.

As a non-profit organization, SAIC is granted tax-exempt status because it furthers a social cause and provides a public benefit; holding funds in trust for the public good for educational purposes. The school's mission is to "provide excellence in the delivery of a global education in visual, design, media, and related arts, with attendant studies in the history and theory of those disciplines set within a broad-based, humanistic curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences". The objective of that mission is to "assemble a diverse body of intelligent and creative students and faculty in an environment designed to facilitate and encourage the discovery and production of significant ideas and images and to provide for the development of individual excellence in undergraduate and graduate programs in the visual and related arts".

We, the undersigned, are committed to working with faculty, students, and leadership in order to address our concerns regarding institutional racism, fostering hostile work environments,

and prioritizing business practices over the execution of the organization's stated mission and objective; and build a better future for an institution we are all invested in and indebted to.

Each of the six areas we address below raise issues with safety, institutional racism, and Title IX. Many of these issues have been raised numerous times in staff meetings, through the Employee Engagement Committee, and during the 2018 Gallup poll. We feel that we have gone unheard by the administration. We make the following demands in an effort to be heard and to address the division's issues and concerns.

We propose the six institutional actions be implemented immediately and permanently:

1) Anti-racism Initiatives

The stated objective of SAIC is *"To assemble a diverse body of intelligent and creative students and faculty in an environment designed to facilitate and encourage the discovery and production of significant ideas and images and to provide for the development of individual excellence in undergraduate and graduate programs in the visual and related arts."*

As a non-profit institution we need to prioritize our commitment to holding funds in trust for the public good over for-profit business practices. We need to shift how we view and merit "success" in recruiting practices, hiring practices, and scholarship distribution to reflect this commitment to public good. Current recruitment practices are done as a for-profit business to create selectivity and actively discourage diversity.

- Implement anti-racist structure in the recruiting, review, and admission process
- Better support for students in all departments within the institution (ie: financial support and representation)
- Work with the DLRC, Health Services, and Office of Student Affairs to ensure that the Chicago Police Department, or any police department, are not the first point of contact for students experiencing mental health distress on SAIC grounds.
- Provide more Scholarship opportunities for BIPOC, similar to current Massey Scholarship, that are more inclusive to students outside the city of Chicago (and are not based on academics), and be reviewed by staff who have personally interacted with students.
- Audit the promotional budget and unnecessary expenditures, and reallocate towards student support.
- Invest in hiring external experts on anti-racism, education reform, etc. to work with counselor committees to empower staff to create institutional change.
- Rename Columbus Day event and Columbus building.
- Invest in redesigning the SAIC website to prioritize accessibility; include appropriate accommodations, more translation options for resources/pages and the application process, financial transparency, etc.

- Provide visible, results based resources for BIPOC, queer, gender non-conforming, and disabled students on our webpages and/ or distribute through Admissions communications streams.

2) Workplace Culture - Emotional safety

Feeling emotionally safe means employees can freely speak up and communicate openly. They aren't held back by the fear that when voicing their views, they're making themselves vulnerable to criticism or retaliation. This is vital for thriving organizations and depriving staff of the ability to speak up has devastating consequences. Achieving this environment starts by leadership developing respect for staff-members skills, experience, work ethic, and institutional knowledge. Research by Collins & Smith 2006 and Siemsen et al 2009 both found emotional safety helps explain why employees thrive:

“Any act including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilization, or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth.”

- Leadership driven toxicity in the workplace must be addressed and replaced with a culture of respect, honesty, candor, professionalism, and community.
- Leadership must consider the resignation or elimination of individuals within the leadership who are not contributing positively to the workplace culture.
- Weaponization of personal relationships will no longer be tolerated.
- Employee physical and emotional safety must be prioritized at all times.
- Establish and adhere to boundaries around work hours - and when exceeded or violated, provide compensation (ie. comp days or extra pay)

3) Safety & Security - Physical Safety

- COVID-19
 - Leadership needs to make the health and safety of faculty, staff, and students their first priority.
 - Ensuring 100% virtual recruitment model until a vaccine is available and accessible.
 - Leadership to acknowledge, and incorporate into recruitment planning, the long term effects of COVID-19 exposure on the individual, that may result in death or chronic, life-long illness.
 - Involve staff in the on-going return-to-work plan, including real time updates.
- Develop an emergency preparedness plan for travel and event safety (health, natural disasters, violence).

4) Leadership

Leadership at SAIC should be more innovative and democratic to foster a healthy, inclusive, respectful and and more productive work environment. Division leadership has often neglected

to seek input/consultation from its staff, resulting in little transparency and insufficient communication.

- Prioritize, address, and act on faculty, staff, and students concerns.
- Foster belonging and Inclusion: We need leaders to play a crucial role in making people feel heard and included, to enable all individuals to freely express themselves, foster an environment of psychological safety in which all feel joined together in the face of crisis.
- Leadership needs to respect both confidentiality and the privacy of staff, faculty, and students.
- Lack of operational transparency causes inefficiencies that hinder job performance.
- Establish a no retaliation or change in treatment in the workplace practice, not just policy.
- Access to abuse of power information policies and procedures (workplace, leadership, safety).
- Mandatory in person training (once safe) for all Admissions Leadership and Staff led by outside consultants, not driven by learning capsules in Bridge or internal HR.
 - Anti-Racism
 - Micro-Aggression
 - Unconscious Bias
 - Ethics: Behavior in the Workplace
 - Managerial Training for Upper Administration
- Evaluate progress periodically through the dissemination of an anonymous survey completed voluntarily by staff, faculty, and students.

5) Operational

- In collaboration with current staff, leadership will build an effective position-specific training program to support staff at time of on-boarding and throughout employment.
- Training will include full operational understanding of all platforms (Presentations, Slideroom, Concur, Salesforce, PeopleSoft, etc) to allow accessibility to these databases so all Assistant Directors can effectively do their jobs.
- Develop transition policies for promotions and transitions so that staff coverage is in-place in times of leadership changes. Individual staff should not be working two jobs simultaneously.
- Students and Staff need the support of a designated individual to contact for information about how to voice concerns and rectify situations of institutional racism, discrimination, and workplace misconduct that is autonomous from Human Resources. This cannot be an info email address and needs to be a person.
- Restructure the physical office space based on inclusivity and staff needs, not seniority.

6) Fiduciary - Scholarships, Allocation of Funding

As a non-profit institution we should prioritize our commitment to holding funds in trust for the public good over for-profit business practices. We need to shift how we talk about “Success” in recruiting practices, hiring practices, scholarship distribution - to reflect a commitment to public good. Current recruitment practices are conducted as a for-profit business.

- Audit the admissions budget, prioritize cutting spending to increase scholarship support.

- Reimagine current scholarship distribution methods in collaboration with staff and students to find ways to better support diverse enrollment at SAIC.
- Provide housing and on campus living financial aid support through a need based process.
- Provide more Financial Aid literacy support for students. Work with Financial Aid to create a more helpful experience for students (also anti-racist, first generation students, lower-income families)
- Clearly list additional departmental financial support resources that are available to students in a central online location.

We believe in the future of SAIC and look forward to doing the work needed to make our organization stronger, safer, and more inclusive; however, despite the efforts of the Employee Engagement Committee appointed by Division leadership, there has been no meaningful change since the 2018 Gallup poll results were received. Division staff have been working with the Employee Engagement Committee to raise the concerns addressed in this document and have worked diligently to utilize SAIC's institutional channels to enact change, but no documentable or observable action has been taken by leadership. We have accumulated detailed accounts of instances motivating this statement and are willing to provide documentation of instances motivating these demands as needed.

The undersigned fully support these demands and all adjacent organizing efforts of SAIC staff, faculty, and students and stand in solidarity with them.

Jackson Moore, Associate Director of International Admissions

Sheika Lugtu, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions (BFA/BAVCS 2017)

Kaycee Filson, Assistant Director of On Campus Admissions

Kate Perryman, Assistant Director of International Admissions

Jonathan Korotko, Assistant Director of On Campus Admissions (MFA Printmedia 2019)

Travis Michael Tiblier, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions (BFA 2014)

Claire Spaulding, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions (BFA/BAVCS 2018)

Sioban Nora Lombardi, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions

Anna Trier, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions

Rachel Dorsey, Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions (BFA 2014)

