

10/07/2021



Town Hall Notes

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## BSO Town Hall 2021

### Introductions:

- David Sanders: (BSO President)
  - Please be fully transparent
- Lem Cartman: (VP of BSO)
  - Talked about the problems and issues of the Black students on campus
- Jolie Foor (Student Body)
  - Keeping track of time, please state name before question
- Ben Jacobs (Student Body VP)
  - Talking about being transparent and helping with issues on campus

### Questions:

**Professor Richard Severe: Black faculty and staff are leaving the University. There is a trend as constituents of color continue to leave. Do you think there is a reason that staff and faculty of color continue to leave?**

- AVP of DEI, Angela Vidal-Rodriguez: Valparaiso is conservative and there is a history of racism and this makes it hard for people to settle here.
- Professor Lissa Yogan: These issues are affecting all faculty and staff. Factors are budget constraints (salary lowered). Difficult to retain staff due to these financial concerns.
  - Should we create some sort of system to retain and support people of color on our campus?
  - Lift this burden by training, ownership, etc.
  - Should we give and help more people stay by increasing or giving more to the staff of color?
- Dean of Nursing, Karen Allen: Missed an opportunity to ask them why they were leaving. Do we have any exit interview data? Why did they leave the University? List the Black faculty and staff and ask them individually why they left?
  - Need to get more information on what is going on with why they are leaving?
- Director of Counseling Services, Stewart Cooper: Parallel between students and faculty of color- stress of racism and lack of support. Broader problem within higher education

with a large number of people who are leaving. Students of color are leaving too, probably for similar reasons.

**Nick Davis: The faculty do not represent the BIPOC student body. Why are not all faculty members required to participate in diversity and inclusion training?**

- AVP of DEI, Angela Vidal-Rodriguez: (OMP) Plan in action agenda to include this, agenda was halted, her plan is to extend the new requirement to all staff and faculty, not just new members

**Lem Cartman: Why has the action agenda been halted? This has produced distrust from students of color to administrators, they feel like they aren't being heard or taken seriously.**

- AVP of DEI, Angela Vidal-Rodriguez: Agenda was halted to the leadership transitions on campus, COVID-19, staff and faculty leaving, Angela's goal is to restart this agenda for the community. The sooner we get started, the better. She wanted to work with Civic to form a task to move the process forward. There are only 2 Civic members, and she has to recruit 20 more. Create a democratic process to move forward. She understands the concerns of faculty and students that their work isn't valued. She's trying to work as fast as possible to restart the agenda.
- Director of Student Involvement, Ryan Bye: Up until May, Civic was working on action agenda goals. They usually resume in August but there was a transition in leadership.
- Professor Lissa Yogan: Progress hasn't stopped, faculty are working on diversifying the curriculum, thinking about how to integrate more diverse voices in courses. Things are still happening even if it doesn't seem like it. Change is slow because it takes a whole semester to go through a process. For tenure and promotion, there are a lot of steps to update this. Budget for the action agenda wasn't enough to immediately get everything done, we have to prioritize what we want to change with our limited resources. Time to work through these different systems.
- Director of Athletics, Mark LaBarbera: The Athletics Department was working over the summer on getting a diversity plan and they are in the final steps of finishing strategic diversity plans, the goal is to have it done by the end of the semester. Part of broader revised strategic plan for Athletics. Plan is going to coaches and students to make sure the plans will create action. Haven't done a great job of communicating this progress.
- VP of Student Life, Steve Janowiak: Most of the administrators care deeply about this. Student Life is working on different committees, but the loss of staff in the Multicultural Programs has halted things and there aren't enough people to take care of issues. Positions were cut because of COVID-19, trying to get back to function properly to get the work done. Now working on getting new members on the team to help with the team.

**Laura Reid: Because it's not required, is there a way to get a list of professors who attended the workshop and are interested in creating positive change?**

- Professor Lissa Yogan: Didn't take attendance, not everyone came because of their schedule, workshop was 4 hours long, attendance doesn't show if they were interested in diversifying their curriculum. Not sure the best way to find that out, network among students through word of mouth?
- Trisha Dean of Library: Created a list of resources to provide through the library that specifically fall under the umbrella of diversity, equity and inclusion. Purposely including voices that should have been included all along. Purchased over 70 items, \$3000 worth, of more content and the library is committed to investing in diverse material.
- AVP of DEI, Angela Vidal-Rodriguez: Ask the people involved with the action agenda to send updates including the needs of the budget so they can decide how to move forward. Post information on the website highlighting the efforts and updates w the agenda.
- Dean of Nursing, Karen Allen: Academic leaders how to care for people of different racial groups in Nursing. Mannequins of different races were recently purchased. We should sit down with a group of students and ask if we dive deep enough in our teaching to include patients of different races. We need to dig into the agenda and look at the opportunity to teach differently.
- Director of Counseling Services, Stewart Cooper: Productive discussion in his courses on how to diversify material.

**Amber Mosley: What is the institutional protocol when a student is caught saying racial slurs or racial slang towards a person?**

- Dean of Students, Ryan Blevins: Bias complaint process. Ask the individual to submit a statement to the team that meets weekly to look over all complaints submitted. The committee discusses the incident and works with the individual to work on the restorative nature of educating those involved and healing the community. Is this a systemic issue? Opportunities to educate students? Angela's group helps with the action plan and helps with the overall plan to help the minority students.
- AVP of DEI, Angela Vidal-Rodriguez: Ask students what kind of restorative process they would like to see. We can promote training for the communities that this continuously involves so we are proactive in the way that we train our students, along with staff. She plans to bring that idea to the committee.
- Assistant VP of Student Life, Carrie Whittier: Juniors were required to take a DEI workshop. All first year students were required to take that this year. Follow-up program to continue this dialogue on understanding how we talk about diversity, equity and inclusion at Valpo.

**Casey: We hosted a privilege walk this past week, and the idea of microaggressions was brought up. In a PWI (primarily white institution), where microaggressions are a large part of student concerns, how can we help with student's experiences or fear of this?**

- AVP of DEI, Angela Vidal-Rodriguez: The training that is happening makes the students more away from bias incidents etc. Microaggressions are a big part of the action plan and the focus of continuous training of the staff. There needs to be training for students so they know they need to report these incidents and follow up with bias incident reports. Informing the students so they know administrators will not be accepting microaggressions.

**Frank T: I have heard students say things that aren't overtly racist but that should clearly not be said. What is the process for determining what people can and can't say and how does that get told to the students?**

- Professor Lissa Yogan: We can't start working with the assumption that people understand what a microaggression is. Some people don't know what this is and it's easier to identify overt racism. People in our country and on our campus aren't sure what language to use and it feels like an ever-shifting landscape. Continuously educating one another and helping each other learn, doesn't have a better answer besides education.
- Director of Counseling Services, Stewart Cooper: Bystander intervention is an important part of this, holding colleagues accountable.
- AVP of DEI, Angela Vidal-Rodriguez: Move the institution to a different culture. Make sure faculty are careful in the classroom and aware of concerns. Transform the culture. Professors need to address that the gray zone is unacceptable in their classroom. It is important for faculty members to recognize how important it is that they use the students' pronouns, as an example.

**Matthew Spivey: We have tools available, core and mandatory events etc. We have all these events but we don't have any about African American history or Latinx history. CC students read white textbooks. When are we going to see that change?**

- Dean of Nursing, Karen Allen: Absolutely, we need to stop talking about it and start doing it. We need to talk about what's talking about in society and organize safe discussions. Where are we going to have these conversations? We need to allow civic-informed education to occur in the 21st century.
- Professor Lissa Yogan: Will be taking notes to the core and CC directors.

**Justine: As an institution, how can we institutionalize cultural competence for student leadership?**

- Assistant VP of Student Life, Carrie Whittier: Active part of current dialogue, planning a leadership development retreat for all the major student organizations on campus who are

driving change on campus and have access to the financial resources for change. This will be an overnight program with the intention to create a dialogue. Intended audience is for people who need to learn more. We haven't created an environment where people can talk and understand one another. The challenge is hiring staff and faculty to be role models for students to work together. Building those relationships within the next 6-8 months. No cost for students to be a part of that dialogue. The creation of the Center for Student Involvement (CSI) is intentional. Before, our departments were isolated and we weren't able to work together easily. Students should not have to divide a line between their interests, beliefs, and identities. We need to listen to students and have them be comfortable talking with us.

- VP of Student Life, Steve Janowiak: Job of the administrators to create the right environments for these discussions to happen. Plans are made to change leadership retreats, programming, etc. You are going to see more changes in student life.
- Dean of College of Engineering, Doug Tougaw: College of Engineering has student organizations and before COVID, they put together a workshop for the executive boards to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Tekeidra Masters: When I was a Freshman, there wasn't a resource for students that pointed them in the direction to complain and feel like their concerns were heard. How can we change this?**

- AVP of DEI, Angela: We have a task of making sure the bias committee is known about and that it is available, a safe space, and announced to all students. Rebuilding trust is important. Students need to feel safe to tell us where our limitations are. Allow us to build this trust to move the campus forward.
- Dean of Students, Ryan Blevins: As dean of students, I view my role as an advocate for students. The trust between me and others in my area is not there. We are going to work on that trust so students feel comfortable coming to talk to me/us. If you have a concern, me and my staff want to hear about it and help come up with a solution to it.

**Tekeidra Masters: Joining a Fraternity or Sorority can be an essential part of the college experience. However, many minority students aren't able to pay the steep costs for FSL. Are you open to creating some sort of scholarship for students of color interested in joining FSL?**

- Assistant VP of Student Life, Carrie Whittier: There are foundations and endowments that allow students to get their education. Those scholarships do not apply to FSL due to it being considered "social." However, those funds can offset book and tuition costs which can in a roundabout way help with those FSL fees. It's possible, but it can't be solely for students of color, it would have to go towards low-income students. There is an ongoing conversation within the FSL community about creating a scholarship for

students from low economic statuses to join FSL. We are in the process of inviting a Historically African American Sorority on campus, but nationally, it's 4x more expensive than other FSL groups. University doesn't have control over this and it's a nationwide challenge. This can be very isolating. We are working and talking about the financial concerns of joining FSL.

**Essence Roberson: For many of us in this room, many of our ancestors wouldn't have been able to attend Valpo in the past so how does the legacy scholarship help us? How is the university addressing institutionalized racism within our structure?**

- College of Nursing Dean, Karen Allen: First step is identifying it. Staff in Nursing college read "How to Be Antiracist" and it got everyone thinking about systemic racism. We need to continue this education to eliminate entrenched bias and racism in our systems.
- Professor Lissa Yogan: Reason for the action agenda to impact systems on our campus. It is a systemic issue to only read white authors and white textbooks. Each action agenda item is where Valpo is looking to attack the systemic issues that we face.
- AVP of DEI, Angela: If you are comfortable in your position, you are not tackling some of the problems with systemic racism because you are going to get pushback. It takes time to change some things that are rooted in culture vs changing one question on an application that is excluding people, for example.
- Director of Student Involvement, Ryan Bye: Whose voices are we lifting up? We need to share the names of student leaders of color when opportunities come up, not just the same 5 white students.
- VP of Enrollment, Brian O'Rourke: Own and name our systemic issues. The holistic review process was created by higher education to exclude Black and POC Americans from joining their school. We need to understand structures we need to put in place around access. Who do we recruit? What schools do we visit? What financial aid do we provide? We are engaged with 6 institutions around the state who are working on increasing the enrollment of POC and working on eliminating the financial barrier of education.
- Dean of Nursing, Karen Allen: We usually focus on bridge programs for POC students. But where are students of color who are presidential scholars? There are brilliant Black students and students of color that we need to target with our enrollment efforts.
- Provost for Graduate Programs, Mike Tyler: We have struggles diversifying graduate student populations. We just started reaching out to McNare Scholars, a national program for POC students interested in research to help them create their own research agenda so they are qualified and ready to join graduate school. Taking beginning steps in the Graduate program.

**Alison Howard: After last year, there has continued to be a lack of trust with both law enforcement and POC. Is there any program we could create to allow POC students to build a better relationship with VUPD?**

- AVP of DEI, Angela: The Chief of Police for VUPD is a part of the bias response team. He's been working with his department, and a large part of the action agenda includes VUPD. There are some structures embedded within the police department that need to be addressed.
- Professor Lissa Yogan: One action agenda item is around policing. Social work professor is working with law enforcement on diversity.
- Dean of Students, Ryan Blevins: Let's work together to make this happen quickly. Chuck Garber is already 100% on board.

**Lem Cartman: What happens if Angela leaves and we're back to square one? When people leave, the infrastructure for diversity and inclusion change crumbles. Is there a way to ensure that action continues even if people leave?**

- Assistant VP of Student Life, Carrie Whittier: Every position description now has a diversity statement in it. Where we are now as a university is in a place that is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion. It is a priority for the university as a whole that is stated when staff is being hired. The action agenda is Valparaiso University's action agenda. Students should ask what faculty and staff are doing to help with the action agenda. The action agenda isn't the OMP's responsibility- it needs to be everyone involved or we will fail. The university includes everyone involved in Valpo's community, it is important for all of us to take up a role in that.
- Dean of Nursing, Karen Allen: Bump it up to the strategic plan for the University. The sustainability is in place when you make DEI the strategic plan. There are pillars in place when that happens which keeps it from crumbling.
- VP of Enrollment, Brian O'Rourke: It takes time to change a culture. Talked to president Padilla before even applying for the job, he said go find the action agenda and look at it. You need to not only be on board with the agenda but excited about it. This is a true and honest commitment by the institution to move this action agenda forward and make it about our culture. To make it a part of the lived experiences of our students here.
- AVP of DEI, Angela: The process is happening right now. Civic was created to move DEI efforts forward. Civic can bring issues and concerns from other parts of the university to move diversity forward in ways we haven't thought of in the action agenda.

**Jeremiah Johnson: I am the National Society of Black Engineers Treasurer and a Track and Field athlete. Are there standards for coaches and staff to go through diversity training and how are coaches and staff dealt with when it comes to racism.**

- Director of Athletics, Mark LaBarbera: We've had educational opportunities but they are not required. There is no required diversity training. We run into problems of coaches being gone when some of these opportunities are available. The One Valpo promise was redone with a strategic diversity committee involved in that. We have no written down standards of what we expect in this area. We do have professional standards that are expected and those standards have been addressed when needed.

**Jeremiah Johnson: Are there penalties for coaches and teammates if they are racist?**

- Director of Athletics, Mark LaBarbera: When teammates have done something they are put into the bias incident system. There is a student athlete code of conduct. Those issues would be dealt with internally.

**David Sanders: Is there accountability for actions and systemic issues on campus?**

- AVP of DEI, Angela: We can continually have conversations about these topics. We can brainstorm with students more often about these topics. We can ask what have we done? How can we help? How can we move forward? It is part of my division's responsibility to make sure the work is getting done all the time and report that to the administration.
- Professor Lissa Yogan: There is more accountability on this action agenda than I have seen before. President Padilla and the board are overlooking the items on the action agenda and that is the highest level of accountability you can have. The dashboard, the board, and the president, are all holding people accountable.
- Director of Counseling Services, Stewart Cooper: We have an agreement to call each other out as situations that arise, such as misidentifying or using the wrong pronoun.
- Provost for Graduate Programs, Mike Tyler: We all submit personal goals for the year, and they look different for everyone but we all have goals in the area of diversity and inclusion.

**Assistant VP of Student Life Carrie Whittier, to students: What does accountability look like to students?**

- Accountability looks like holding each other accountable and respecting students when they have questions.
- Be transparent with students and tell them what's going on.
- Things getting done. That's how you know someone is holding someone accountable.
- Not our responsibility to come to you constantly. Make sure you send emails updating, instead of waiting for an incident. We are all growing and changing together and we should stay updated and informed.
- Be upfront and talk about the progress. Celebrate the things that are being completed. Give off the sense of progress and accomplishment.



- Nursing Dean Karen Allen: In order to hold someone accountable you have to have the measuring pieces available. You have to be able to see the difference. Self reflection is an important part of accountability. When you talk about systemic racism you have to talk about the biggest system we have here and that is teaching. The biggest accountability is our accountability to ourselves and our accountability to God.

**Have you come across any alumni who feel excited about or are unsure about the DEI progressions at the university? Specifically an influx or decrease in funds in that area.**

- Nursing Dean Karen Allen: The money in the college of nursing specifically has not changed. We've had a black dean for 5 years and funding hasn't changed.
- AVP of DEI, Angela: Change of religions has concerned alumni, but big donors are seeking to diversify the university. There are alumni outside of the Valpo community who are trying to bring diverse proposals to campus.