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BSU DCGA budget request 2009-2010

Denison University

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Dear Denison Community,

Throughout this school year the Denison's Campus Governance Association (DCGA) has perpetrated numerous bias based acts against the Black Student Union. The true maliciousness and ill intent of these actions have been obscured under the guise of situational decisions, however, the consistency and predictability of DCGA's decisions to deny the Black Student Union in various situations delineates the source of their decision-making. In their denial of funding, reallocation, and support of any sort, their lies and inherent objection to the function of our organization is clearly evident to members of our campus community.

This year alone, DCGA has attempted to deny the Black Student Union funding for the Black Men's Summit, contesting our urgent desire to bring three international scholars to address Denison's significantly low retention rates for Black Men and its impact for the campus as a whole. Shortly after we won the struggle for funding, DCGA postured once more and tried to disrupt preparations for the Black Men's Summit by denying a further allocation of funds on the premise that our student operating budget of well-over \$100,000 was strained. This disruption in preparation challenged the success of the summit and further emphasized DCGA's lack of support to the mission of the Black Student Union and our campus community as a whole. Furthermore, to solidify their intent in regards to the Black Student Union, the Finance Committee of DCGA, led by the current Finance Chair, has denied us a budget for the 2009-2010 school year.

These attacks on the Black Student Union completely disregard the significance of our mission and the unique and important commitment that our organization has to our campus community. The BSU plays a major in the retention of Black students. As an organization, we contribute significantly to the multicultural presence on campus. In fact, our function as an organization coincides directly with Denison's mission statement, in that we actively seek to "engage students in the liberal arts, which fosters self-determination and demonstrates the transformative power of education. We envision our students' lives as based upon rational choice, a firm belief in human dignity and compassion unlimited by cultural, racial, sexual, religious or economic barriers, and directed toward an engagement with the central issues of our time." In every facet of Black Student Union lies a manifestation of these enumerated institutional goals.

Given the recent egregious and insidious acts and decisions made by the fiscal policies of the current Denison Campus Governance Association Finance Chair and on behalf of the entire Senate body of DCGA, the members of the Black Student Union stand resolved to present the following urgent and necessary demands to ensure that such violations are never again perpetrated:

- **2009-2010 Black Student Union budget granted in full**

As an organization, it is imperative that we have funding to carry out our yearly events. It is neither realistic nor rational to assume that any other organization or campus office should bear the sole responsibility of our necessary programming and activities. In accordance with our Constitution, our events follow the philosophical goal of reaching out to

and supporting the cause of Black Students on our campus. We are the only organization on campus that exists for this cause. To deny funding to us effectively and directly denies the support of and means necessary for the survival and success of these students. Furthermore, such is a blatant form of disrespect for the university's expressed mission to promote and sustain diversity and directly undermines all efforts to build an inclusive and supportive campus community. If allowed to continue unrestrained, these heinous acts will surely have a direct impact on the yielding and retention of students and faculty of color and will adversely affect the campus climate. Thus, we demand the immediate issuance of a 2009-2010 budget.

- **Full restoration of both community senator seats within the DCGA**
 - **Two permanent community senator seats**
 - **In addition to the two permanent community seats to be written into the DCGA Constitution, we demand additional seats to be distributed to communities in proportion to their respective student population.**

In accordance with our understanding of our campus governance body, the DCGA exists solely to "ensure the direct student participation in campus governance to protect the rights of the students of Denison University, and to mind the legitimate needs and desires of the students and manifest them in policy and institutional action" (DCGA website). As a community of informed citizens, we feel our governing body has done an extreme disservice to the entire student body and campus community by allowing multiple seats held by community members to be revoked and withheld from the communities they were designed to assist. It is clear to us that by revoking these aforementioned seats, our voice within the student governing body will continued to be silenced. Further, we demand legislation instituting a two-seat minimum for all minority communities with additional seats to be given based on the student population of the community. We publically oppose any and all attempts to decrease the size of our student governing body and especially object to the removal and or silencing of any minority voice in the said governing body.

- **Permanent BSU seat on the DCGA Exec Board**

Because it has been proven necessary to include minority, especially Black voices, in positions of leadership within our governing body, we demand the immediate creation of a community-elected DCGA Executive position. The person elected to this position will serve as the community liaison and should serve as chair of a DCGA-recognized committee.
- **A permanent BSU seat on the following campus committees:**

- DCGA Finance Committee
- University Council
- Campus Affairs Council
- Academics Committee
- Residence Life Committee

Understanding the power of voice for sustained and purposed action, we demand the instatement of a permanent BSU-appointed member to the aforementioned campus communities. As we have seen, issues that directly and often adversely affect our community are seldom regarded by these committees as issues of urgent importance. Further, we recognize the importance of having individuals who are involved and intrinsically related to our community to hold these positions and give necessary voice to issues and matters pertaining to us as a community.

- **Increased funding for the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs**

As we have seen, it has been the practice of the current DCGA administration to deny necessary funds to minority organizations with the behest to seek out the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs for further financial assistance. It is clear that the aforementioned office is frequently in dire need of sufficient funding; yet, our governing body has repeatedly placed the burden of support for minority organizations on the budget of this office. In doing so, our governance association has refuted its own charge to “financially support...clubs and organizations [that]...provide the Denison community with opportunities to participate in athletics, write for...publications, volunteer in the local community, learn about various cultures, and attend well-known speakers” (DCGA website). The Black Student Union meets each of these conditions. Thus, because our organization safely falls under the realm of and guidelines for funding by DCGA, it is irresponsible of our current administration to reject its responsibility to our organization and, moreover, our community.

- **Funding set aside specifically for efforts to retain students of color**

Because our Denison Campus Governance Association is an esteemed body of leaders that has been charged with the responsibility of responding to the “needs and desires” of members of the Denison community, we feel as though a matter of urgent concern is the level and quality of current initiatives to retain students of color on our campus. Securing funding for this specific cause goes far beyond various programming efforts done by a myriad of groups, rather, it works to reduce the various factors that result in the socio-cultural isolation of students and thus will effectively assist in increasing retention rates of students of color.

- **DCGA-sponsored resolution to the university and faculty calling for a full passing of the proposed I,I-requirement to the GE Package**

In accordance to the mission statement of our institution, it is our goal as a community to balance the breadth and width of our curriculum by developing “interdisciplinary integration of the many forms of knowledge. While students [here] pursue specialized learning in their chosen majors, they also develop the framework for an integrated intellectual life, spiritually and morally informed” (Denison Mission Statement). As a community, we feel as though our institution has moved away from this purposed and active component of our mission statement by allowing the intent of the former J-requirement to be revised and replaced with its modern “I” component. We feel as though the current proposal will assist in restoring the original intent of the former J-requirement.

- **Complete revision of the DCGA Finance Committee**

As a community of informed scholars, we feel as though it is irresponsible of our governance body to convene a small committee of individuals who meet in closed meetings to determine the fiscal success or failure of entire communities which they often know nothing about. Thus, we demand the complete constitutional revision of the DCGA Finance Committee to include non-DCGA community members to represent the voice of minority communities. This revision will add a minimum of two community-elected, non-DCGA persons from the multicultural community as well as the religious community who will serve on the Finance Committee as full voting members. Further, we require that no business be conducted without, at minimum, one of each being present.

- **Each member of DCGA to be required to participate in one Sustained Dialogue group for the entire academic year.**

As a community, we recognize the importance of dialogue and understanding in our daily lives. The Black Student Union fully supports the university’s mission to produce informed and active moral agents who are autonomous thinkers and engaged in the world surrounding them. Thus, we demand an amendment to the DCGA Constitution requiring all members to participate in one Sustained Dialogue group for the entire academic year in addition to the requirements already in place.

- **Annual minimum of \$50,000 for Black Student Union programming**

Generally, our operating budget for our organization includes various programming efforts to support members of our community. In addition to the nearly \$15,000 used to fund over ten committees (including Brother to Brother, Sister to Sister, Academics Committee, Political Action, and Community Service), we collaborate with various organizations, offices,

and departments generally with well over \$10,000, and spend the remaining funds with monies allocated for Black History Month and our annual Culture Jam celebration.

- **Purchase of a Denison van to be used and administered solely through the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs**
- **Immediate and complete removal of all individuals on the DCGA Finance Committee and Executive Board that voted to allow inconsistent practices of our campus governance body which precipitated the issuance of these demands.**

According to the current Finance Chair, the decision made to disrupt the vitality of the Black Student Union was a direct result of the advisement of a unanimous vote of the Executive Board of DCGA and a 7-2 vote by the Finance Committee. Thus, we demand the immediate and complete removal and or resignation of the following persons that have all violated our community's trust and security in the practices of our governance body. Recognizing our right to hold the following individuals accountable, their names are listed below:

Ryan Burandt – DCGA President; Shavely Peralta – DCGA Vice-President; Eric Brisson – Rules Chair; Sibylle Freiermuth; Ryan Buesser – Academics Chair; Jessica Blaise – Projects Chair; Kimmi Oshita – Public Relations Committee; Borden Marshall – Parliamentarian; J and Lauren Waters - DCGA Treasurer. Also, Sherilyn Jia, Will Doss, Rob Moore, John Zanner, Elizabeth Elmheart, and Patrick Hewitt – all current members of the DCGA Finance Committee.

If you desire to join in the Black Student Union's efforts please contact us at bsu@denison.edu for information as to how you can be of assistance.

Thank you for your time,

The loyal members, allies, and supporters of the Black Student Union and the Black Community of Denison University

