

Presidents' Update

Friday 12 June 2020

Dear Students,

This week we want to focus our letter entirely on the Black Lives Matter movement. We have been shocked, angered and heartbroken at what we have been seeing online, kickstarted by the murder of George Floyd, therefore we want to highlight the action that we, as your Students' Union, as your Presidents (and all white ones at that) recognise the power we hold to make positive change for our BAME students, and we do not take this lightly. Last week we put out a [statement](#) with our stance on this, but we want to use this opportunity to tell you all about the work we have been doing since, as well as the work we are planning on this matter.

Listening to you

We recognise and acknowledge those who have written to us supporting BLM and thank you for taking the time to contact us. We hear how important this is to you and want to reassure you how important it is to us as well. Your collective voice over this has been loud and the universities are listening. Many of you will also have seen a petition circulating - it requests demands of Falmouth University to address BAME equality within the institution. We have spoken to the student who set this up and we are working to open conversations between the University and our students to develop goals addressing these demands.

Social media

Many of you are using social media to express your views and experiences. Whilst this is completely valid, we want to address these issues and support the students involved, but we can't do this with anonymous posts. If you have experienced any form of harassment or mistreatment whilst at university, we urge you to [contact us](#), use [Tell Me](#) or [Exeter Speaks Out](#) to report what has happened. It is only through these channels that we can truly begin to address the problems within our community. our students to develop goals addressing these demands.

Focus groups

In the coming weeks, the Welfare and Inclusivity President will be hosting focus groups with students from the BAME community to understand real-life experiences and discuss the change we can achieve together. This is important to us because it helps us understand where things are going wrong and where we need to improve. The first of these will be held on Monday at 11am (GMT). To join this meeting, use this Teams [link](#).

Protests

We also understand that many of you will want to join the protests taking place as a stand of solidarity, however we would urge you to take care. We are still in the midst of a pandemic and we ask that you please take all measures to protect yourselves and others in light of the risk posed by Covid-19.

Long-term plan

This issue is not going away anytime soon and we promise not to let it be brushed aside and keep this conversation going. Equality is always a priority for us, and we understand the necessity to continuously and actively challenge our procedures and diversify our opportunities. As your Students' Union, we are establishing our own equality, diversity and inclusion planning tool to review the work we do and help to ensure that no student is disadvantaged. We will continue to work with you, our members, to create long-term change within our practices.

We are still in the early stages of understanding/influencing what the universities' operational plans are for their Access to Participation plans for all our minority students, and situations like these highlight their importance so much more and, while we only have a few weeks left of our roles as Presidents, this is a stark reminder to ensure that we double down on educating our incoming team on the hardships and disadvantages of BAME and other minority groups, as well as start more conversations within our networks on how we can be doing more.

As always, we are all here for you and want you to know that you can reach out to us to talk about your concerns on anything in this uncertain time. We are available on nearly all platforms (Facebook, Skype, Teams, phones, etc), so please do not hesitate if you would like reassurance or a direct conversation on your concerns/situation, or even if you are feeling isolated and just want a chat.

All the best and stay safe,

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