

December 13, 2018

To Department of Nutrition Students

This is the response of the Department of Nutrition leadership to the student letter of December 7, 2018. This letter, pertaining to the recommendation for the disposition and preservation of the confederate monument, was very much appreciated as part of our ongoing Department goal of open discussion toward an ever-more inclusive and positive climate. We purposefully waited until we had opportunity to hold an Open Forum (December 12, 2018) with students before providing our response.

First, we recognize that previous statements from our Department, posted on our website, are not as explicit in stating that the monument should be off-campus. This was unintended.

**To be clear - we agree that the statue, with the bigotry and white supremacist ideology that it reflects, has no place on an inclusive campus. We do not want to see it returned.**

In a communication with the Chancellor's office (9-22-2018) we expressed our Department faculty's consensus that the Monument should be off campus. In addition, the Chair's active engagement on the Faculty Executive Committee and Faculty Council, has provided additional opportunity to convey this position, via discussions and in votes in favor of all the Faculty Council Resolutions addressing the Monument beginning with Resolution 2017-10 (9-18-2017) requesting efforts to remove Silent Sam from McCorkle Place. In particular, please note Resolution 2018-5: "On Supporting a Statement from UNC Black Faculty on the Permanent Removal of Silent Sam from Campus". This was an exceptionally important resolution, explicitly calling for permanent removal of the statue and its base from campus. Most recently (12-7-2018), in Resolution 2018-9, the Faculty Council opposed the plan put forward by Chancellor Folt and the Board of Trustees, reaffirming support for permanent removal of Silent Sam from our campus.

***Resolution 2018- The Faculty Council resolves: In light of Resolution 2018-5 "On Supporting a Statement from UNC Black Faculty on the Permanent Removal of Silent Sam from Campus" requesting the permanent removal of the statue and its base from the UNC-Chapel Hill campus, we express our opposition to the recommendation presented by the University and the Board of Trustees on December 3, 2018 to the Board of Governors and recommend its retraction.***

As stated previously with regard to the Department's position on protests, the Department will proceed with our academic work (including teaching, assessments, and posting of grades). The Department cannot support unlawful behavior, and we expect faculty to perform their duties. At the same time, the Department will not impose any additional punitive or retaliatory action for protest-related activity that may happen outside of University responsibilities. This applies to students, faculty and staff. In the context of any specific course, the course director has the responsibility to follow the course syllabus in terms of both providing the educational experience and delivering consequences of actions such as not attending class. We note that TAs in the Department of Nutrition do not post grades themselves; rather it is the responsibility of the course director to do so. The Department leadership will not over-ride the established syllabus, nor the responsibility of the course director to deliver the course. If faculty choose not to perform their duties, the consequences, per the established University systems, should be part

of their decision. Still, individuals (i.e., independent from our role in the University system), as private citizens, can choose to support those who protest, for example, establishing a non-University based fund for legal defense.

In addition to requesting that the statue not be relocated on campus, the student letter we received outlined several thoughtful concerns and clear key action points in response to the Chancellor's proposal:

Regarding cost concerns, we agree that the amount of money for the building and maintenance of the proposed history and education center could be envisioned for alternative uses, especially to improve the experience of minority students, staff and faculty. This reflects the importance of UNC to be actively engaged in pursuit of addressing our history of institutional racism including addressing very practical needs today, in support of people of color.

**In the Department of Nutrition, we commit to spend funds each year on initiatives that support students of color, seeking student input for the ongoing development and planning of these initiatives to promote an affirming and inclusive environment. While funds have been used for these efforts this past fall and have been set aside to continue in the spring, a concrete budget will be developed and implemented in the new academic year to sustain and grow these initiatives.**

**We commit to maintaining transparency with students so as to enable students to listen to and understand administrative decisions via regularly scheduled forums that address major decisions on campus and in the community, as well as within the department; and to continue our inclusion of student representatives in our monthly faculty meetings.**

Regarding the issues around the "mobile police force", your proposed Action to "Invest in efforts for meaningful community dialogue in order to prevent the community from resorting to more drastic action, like toppling a statue" is excellent. Your letter has been forwarded directly to Provost Blouin as the chief academic officer, who is actively engaged with University police and with ongoing discussions with the Town of Chapel Hill.

**In the Department of Nutrition, we commit to meaningful community dialogue by working with students to take feedback and implement actions that improve the student experience, specifically as it pertains to inclusion. Through the ongoing work of the Department Diversity and Inclusion Committee, chaired by Dr. Kim Truesdale, we will seek student voices in developing a department diversity and inclusion statement, helping to identify and strengthen student support services, providing recommendations for our communications and web presence that promote transparency and inclusion, and more.**

We also want to be clear that we have heard your concerns - your disappointments, frustrations, anger, and hope. We recognize that the statue and the events surrounding it, particularly those that have occurred this past semester, have had a tremendous impact on many of you - on students, staff, and faculty; on many of us. We also understand that this impact has been most severe for many who belong to groups that are already marginalized in our society and on our campus. Our students - all of our students - deserve an environment of inclusion; one that is conducive to learning; one in which you feel you belong.

There is much progress yet to be made. We are grateful for and encouraged by your voices in the department, the school, the campus, and the world, as you seek to drive positive change. We will continue open engagement with you, the students we are here to serve, providing the best education we can in our field. We will be mindful of the need to understand the history of this University without dwelling in it; to address racism that remains still today without perpetuating it; and to continue to work with you towards an ever-improved climate of inclusion.

Yours sincerely,

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Melinda Beck, PhD; Associate Chair for Academics, Department of Nutrition

Raz Shaikh, PhD; Associate Chair for Academics, Department of Nutrition

Kim Truesdale, PhD; Chair, Department of Nutrition Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

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*(This letter is the specific response from the Department of Nutrition at UNC, and does not necessarily represent the views of the Gillings School or UNC)*