

Resolved: *The Syracuse University Senate affirms and applauds the attempt of the THE General Body to increase diversity, transparency and shared governance in university practices and pledges to continue these efforts as part of our own work until concrete measures are taken to achieve these goals to the Senate's satisfaction.*

WHY?

In the process of community building, advocacy for marginalized groups and voices is vital. For this reason, and in the spirit of the AAUP Centennial Declaration, which calls on universities to be “built on the full and open participation of diverse faculty and students,” we applaud the efforts of THE General Body to promote such a university.

To the end of producing the inclusive and engaged community to which THE General Body aspires for the long-term and structurally, we particularly affirm, in solidarity with the students, that informed debate requires the timely and transparent access of *all* university members to information and knowledge—including complete financial records— and that the free exchange of knowledge should be a fundamental principle of *all* aspects of university life, not just in the university’s core missions of teaching, research and creative work.

We further affirm, in solidarity with the students, that the participation of *all* university members in genuine decision-making processes is what *creates* a community worthy of the name, and that to mistake rhetoric about “community” with its actual practice is a devaluation—indeed a positive perversion— of community.

We lament that the administrative responses to the “grievances and demands” document issued by THE General Body conspicuously avoided any mention of administrative concern about (or even acknowledgement of) student recognition that erosion of shared governance and academic freedom creates an adverse learning environment for them, and that erosion of faculty governance structures, as well as administration and Board of Trustees disregard for University Senate, GSO and SA decisions, harm the university community as a whole.

We do not call attention to this silence on the part of the administration in order to choose among the student demands, but in order to underscore the distinction between long-term structural change and short-term concessions. Changes in governance structures and transparency practices in the university, materially implemented, so that students, faculty, staff and administration all have meaningful, informed, participatory roles in actual decision making (not simply “recommending” or “advising”) is the sole mechanism through which the goals of inclusion and advocacy for which the students are fighting can be guaranteed for the long-term and in balance with the needs and desires of other community stakeholders, who may not yet have had a chance to voice their own views.

We hope that the administration might learn from the students about how to engage in intellectually serious, rigorous and respectful debate toward *participatory* decision-making. We also urge the administration to eschew—on the model of the students—

empty corporate and PR discourse in communications with faculty, students and staff and speak directly, frankly, and substantively.

Above all, we urge the administration to work with students, faculty and staff in implementing *genuine* shared governance at this university, based on transparent and timely circulation of all relevant information. We realize that the resources of the university are not infinite, and that hard choices must be made with regard to continuing or expanding programs and services and the like. At the same time, however, we insist that when such hard decisions are implemented in a fully informed and genuinely participatory manner, they are not only more likely to be just, but more likely to be accepted, even when we do not all get exactly what we hoped for.

We are proud that our students have been engaging in direct critical praxis of the type that we analyze and encourage in the classroom, and that they brought this praxis to bear in university processes and practices where it is so manifestly needed—a move that we wholeheartedly encourage and affirm.

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