

THE GENERAL BODY

A united front of student organizations at
Syracuse University



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A united front of student organizations
at Syracuse University
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE General Body Fights for 11 Needs Imperative to the Campus Community

November 11, 2014. As THE General Body garners national media attention with articles in *USA Today*, *The Nation*, and *Democracy Now!*, a point of confusion has emerged: the size of the grievances and needs document. For example, when members of THE General Body described students' grievances and needs at a Student Association (SA) meeting last night, one SA member asked, "how can students expect immediate change when the administration has to address 40+ pages of demands?"

To clarify, the bulk of the document comprises extensive research, anecdotes, and definitions (for example, for terms like "racial microaggression" or "hate speech"). The grievances and needs themselves can be summarized in the following 11 points:

- **Opening Fast Forward's new mission and vision statements for widespread university participation.** The new statements omit statements supporting diversity, citizenship, accessibility, democracy, and community engagement. This is imperative since mission and vision statements provide guidance on how the university prioritizes programs, curricula, and the campus environment.

- **Committing to invest in sexual assault services and a community space for survivors in light of the closure of the Advocacy Center.** This includes issuing an apology for closing the Advocacy Center with one business day's notice covertly in an email attachment, without any student or faculty input, and for leaving gaps in crucial services such as advocacy for sexual assault survivors in the summer. It also includes concrete commitments to invest in sexual assault services and prevention.
- **Increased student participation in FastForward workgroups.** THE General Body calls for $\frac{1}{3}$ of each workgroup to be students (of which $\frac{2}{3}$ would be undergraduate students). These groups are charged with determining how the University as a whole will be restructured.
- **Investing in academic programs, scholarships, and faculty/staff representing the diverse student body and academic interests.** This includes honoring the original contract for the POSSE program, which is a merit-based scholarship for inner city leaders, maintaining needs-based scholarships and programs for diverse populations, and recruiting more faculty of color and LGBTQ faculty.
- **Committing to divest from fossil fuels.** This includes transparency about the university's current investments, and a commitment to divestment.
- **Accessibility on campus.** This includes hiring an ADA coordinator to oversee large-scale changes serving students with disabilities, investing in services and trainings for all students, and improving the accessibility of buildings on campus.
- **Taking preventative measures to protect the safety of students with marginalized identities.** This includes diversity training for upper-level administrators, implementing diversity training in curricula, and adding a prohibition on hate speech to the student code of conduct.
- **Working for the well-being of graduate students in GA, RA, and TA positions.** This includes a living wage, commuter parking, and access to open enrollment in dental health care.
- **Improving mental health services on campus.** This includes hiring additional psychiatrists to meet student needs, additional counselors, improving medical transport, and establishing a mental health workgroup.
- **Transparency about administrative budget decisions.** This includes making available a breakdown of how tuition dollars are spent, providing salary data to AAUP, and releasing data on sports team financial transactions and the over \$1 billion raised for the endowment.
- **Investing \$7 million in the library budget.** The university used to have a great library until a move toward technology became the justification for its slow dismantling and the relocation of books. The library now functions primarily as a study space.

Last night, THE General Body submitted a complete series of responses to the administration based on the negotiations over the past few days. Students await a meeting commitment from the administration for Wednesday, November 12.

THE General Body continues to receive wide support from SU faculty and has also received wide support from other university campuses struggling with similar issues.

