

THE GENERAL BODY

A united front of student organizations at
Syracuse University



THE General Body
A united front of student organizations
at Syracuse University
900 Crouse Avenue
Syracuse, NY, 13244

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Yanira Rodriguez
Phone: 315-744-0329
yrodrigu@syr.edu

Vani Kannan
Phone: 703-819-3586
avkannan@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE GENERAL BODY HOLDS DAY OF ACTION

November 13, 2014. On Friday at 12:30p.m., students will gather at the corner of Adams and Marshall St., where they will kick off a day of action in response to Chancellor Kent Syverud's "final" response to THE General Body's needs and grievances, which students have negotiated with administration over the past week.

Students will then hold a silent protest outside of the chancellor's home to show him and his administration that even though they discontinued communication with students, THE General Body maintains its work to improve services for students on campus. At 1:30p.m., students will march to campus for a 2p.m. rally on the quad, and at 2:45p.m., they will hold a vigil with speakers, singers, poets, and testimonies.

THE General Body is spreading its 11-day protest inside Crouse-Hinds Hall, the university's administration building, to Chancellor Syverud's house because he and the upper-level administration have called an end to negotiations and refused to meet with students.

In the open letter to Chancellor Syverud and upper-level administration below, THE General Body responds to Syverud's comments and vows to continue the sit-in until the administration commits to concrete steps forward on students' needs.

Dear Chancellor Syverud and Upper-Level Administration,

At the end of Monday night's meeting, Dean Gonzalez and Dean Kantrowitz committed to having a meeting time scheduled with THE General Body by noon on Tuesday. It has been 52 hours since the administration made that commitment, which remains unfulfilled.

On Tuesday afternoon we received an email from Dean Gonzalez, saying that she would get back to us regarding a meeting time. That commitment remains unfulfilled.

We are glad the administration has made some minor concessions, but we see these concessions as a starting point. For example, the partial apology on the Advocacy Center's irresponsible closure is important, but it should not have taken over 8,000 petition signatures, 3 listening meetings, 2 rallies, and 10 days of a sit-in to achieve this simple and reasonable request. That it took this long speaks to the ongoing reluctance of the administration to meet the basic needs of the entire student body, including services for victims of sexual assault, basic mental health needs, basic accessibility needs, and the commitment in action (not just in words) to supporting students and faculty of color and other historically marginalized identities on campus.

We should not need to sit-in to meet the recommended ratio of counselors to students, determined by the International Association of Counseling Services. We should not need a sit-in to add hate speech to the student code of conduct, ensuring that we have structures in place to address racist and homophobic actions on campus. We should not need to sit-in out of fear, based on the Chancellor's statements to Inside Higher Ed, that Syracuse University will continue to move away from programs (like POSSE) that serve inner city leaders and students of color.

The administration applauds our commitment and leadership while it erects a "construction fence" to block the sit-in from view and deploys ten armed DPS officers at a time to guard a group of students and TAs that have not committed a single offense. We remain committed to the issues that brought such a diverse group of student leaders together. We are not alone on these issues, as the recent support of the GSO to many of our core needs attests, and as strong ongoing support from student organizations and faculty demonstrate.

Clearly, we have not solved issues of transparency, diversity, or democracy on campus, which THE General Body continues to fight for. THE General Body remains committed to moving forward on this process and needs cooperation from administration. We realize the list of grievances and needs is long – this only reflects the magnitude of ongoing problems that have yet to be adequately addressed. THE General Body commits to making Syracuse University a more diverse, inclusive, just, and transparent community. Instead of a "final" response to unfinished and ongoing problems, we ask for a commitment to meet on our reasonable list of student needs.

Sincerely,

THE General Body

###