



BOWDOIN STUDENT GOVERNMENT
BRUNSWICK, MAINE

Office of the President of Bowdoin Student Government

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24 February 2016

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**BSG Assembly Unanimously Condemns
Recent Incident of Cultural Appropriation,
Offers Recommendations to the College**

At 9:30pm on Wednesday, 24 February 2016, the General Assembly of the Bowdoin Student Government voted on a resolution to take a definitive stand on an incident of cultural appropriation that took place on Bowdoin's campus on Saturday, February 20th, 2016 and the anonymous attacks that took place on social media in the aftermath. The Assembly, representing the entire student body of Bowdoin, stands by all students who were injured and affected by the incident.

Following calls to action from student leaders, especially the Latin American Student Organization, the Executive Committee referred a resolution for action to the Assembly. The Assembly believes that it is its duty to respond to these calls to action, as it is constitutionally bound to refine the College's most important goal—the education of students in a residential community. The Assembly asserts that issuing a statement of solidarity is the right action that should be taken by student leaders in such a situation.

Moreover, the Executive Committee and the Assembly are determined to further the education of its own members and the entire student body regarding issues of race and inclusion. The Assembly affirms its role as a leading institution at the College in responding to incidents of bias this academic year, and in perpetuity.

To that end, the Assembly, as made clear in the Statement of Solidarity with student victims of last semester's "gangster party", adheres to the definition of cultural appropriation as the manifestation of racism where there exists a power dynamic in which members of a dominant culture take elements from a culture of people who have been systemically oppressed by that dominant group, perpetuate racist stereotypes, and/or misrepresent a peoples culture.

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The Assembly furthermore asserts that such behavior as displayed on 20 February 2016 and the anonymous attacks in the aftermath are unacceptable and do not reflect inclusive values. Such behavior will not and should not be tolerated by the Bowdoin community. The Assembly is resolved to use this situation as a teaching and learning moment for all students, including its own members. It is the hope of the Assembly to move forward with a restorative vision and progress with the help of all parties.

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A Resolution

WHEREAS, the Assembly reaffirms its adherence to a definition of cultural appropriation as a power dynamic in which members of a dominant culture take elements from a culture of people who have been systemically oppressed by that dominant group, perpetuates racist stereotypes, and/or misrepresents people's culture;

WHEREAS, on Friday, February 20th, 2016 members of the student body organized a "tequila party", during which students appropriated aspects of Mexican culture;

WHEREAS, this act of cultural appropriation is offensive for the previously stated reasons, is disrespectful, creates an environment where students of color, particularly Latino, and especially Mexican, students feel unsafe, and contradicts our goal to refine the education of students in an inclusive residential community;

WHEREAS, our nation and our Bowdoin community continue to struggle to address issues of difference, especially race;

WHEREAS, we promote and prioritize justice for systemically marginalized people;

WHEREAS, the Latin American Student Organization, together with support from other student organizations, individual students, and the Bowdoin Student Government has resolved to address the aforementioned party for purposes of restorative justice and the education of our Bowdoin community;

WHEREAS, the Bowdoin Student Government affirms its role as a leading institution at the College in responding to incidents of bias this academic year, and in perpetuity;

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the members of Bowdoin Student Government, convened in General Assembly—

Reassert the above definition of cultural appropriation, demonstrate how it is unacceptable, indicate support and solidarity for students who feel marginalized actions of their peers, promote honest conversations about issues of race and cultural appropriation, and urge the student body to think deeply about how their actions may infringe upon others' identity.

Be it further,

Resolved, that this Assembly issue a set of Recommendations regarding the appropriate and desired response for incidents of this nature on behalf of the Student Body.

Be it further,

Resolved, that this Assembly authorize and order the President to transmit a copy of this Resolution and the following Recommendations to the President of the College and the Dean of Student Affairs.

Adopted unanimously in General Assembly: 24 February 2016.

BY ORDER OF BOWDOIN STUDENT GOVERNMENT

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Recommendations

The General Assembly of the Bowdoin Student Government submits to the administrators of the College the following set of recommendations regarding response processes to incidents of racial and ethnic bias and stereotyping.

While the Assembly acknowledges the uniqueness of each such incident, we nonetheless encourage the College to develop a general framework for effective and meaningful response.

The administration of the College has improved its response processes to incidents of racial and ethnic bias and stereotyping. Most notably, the Assembly acknowledges the following:

1. President Clayton Rose, together with the Bias Incidence Group, has undertaken to develop a process by which responses to acts of racial and ethnic bias and stereotyping are improved and institutionalized.
2. Dean of Student Affairs Tim Foster readily acknowledged the occurrence of the incident in question. We further note that students appreciated the immediacy of this acknowledgement.
3. The Student Center for Multicultural Life, located at 30 College Street, was opened for discussion and communal processing of the incident in question. We further note that Counseling was appropriately made available to students.

Nonetheless, the same conversations and calls to action compel the Assembly to issue the following recommendations to the Offices of the President and the Dean of Student Affairs.

The Members of Bowdoin Student Government, convened in General Assembly, and speaking with the authority of the Student Body—

Recommend, that the administration should more immediately acknowledge incidents of this nature, and it must acknowledge not only their occurrence but also the deep hurt that students may be feeling immediately following such acts.

Further Recommend,

That the administration must make clear to students, well in advance, their commitment to creating a supportive space for students who have been or feel targeted, *for as long as students deem necessary*.

Further Recommend,

That the administration must create a space for those students who have been or feel specifically targeted.

Further Recommend,

That the administration must create a separate space open to other students for discussion, support, and processing of the incident.

Further Recommend,

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That the Office of Academic Affairs mandate an academic or experience in the classroom for those involved in such incidents.

Further Recommend,

That the College develop processes for punitive measures to be undertaken against those involved in such incidents.

Further Recommend,

That the College remain cognizant of the time and academics of students of color following such incidents and take appropriate measures to ensure their academic, mental, and social wellbeing.

Approved unanimously in General Assembly: 24 February 2016.

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