

News

Campus community expresses concern over BlackNCAC allegations

More than 30 accounts of racial discrimination alleged via BlackNCAC Instagram account

Bree Gray, News Editor | July 23, 2020



In the last two months, more than 30 accounts of racial discrimination faced by Black and Indigenous students of color on campus were posted on a third-party platform known as BlackNCAC on Instagram.

On June 20, BlackNCAC emerged to raise awareness of the realities of systemic racism within the institutions of the North Coast Athletic Conference. According to the account organizers, the platform provides students, alumni and faculty with the ability to anonymously tell their experiences of racism within their campus community. All posts are verbatim from the individuals.

Allegheny College, along with fellow NCAC institutions Ohio Wesleyan University and the College of Wooster, have seen an influx in allegations posted on the account. Allegheny College is the leading institution in the number of posts followed by Ohio Wesleyan University, then the College of Wooster.

Some members of the campus community were appalled by the administration's slow response to address the allegations, especially as Ohio Wesleyan University's administration

was prompt to address the concerns via their official Instagram account. Following the backlash from the campus community and multiple requests to The Campus to investigate, the College released a response addressing the concern and affirming the worth of all students of color enrolled at the College and beyond, on July 8.

“At Allegheny, we affirm the inherent worth, humanity and dignity of all BIPOC, within the Allegheny community and beyond, and we are committed to supporting students of color in every aspect of their time with us,” the College stated in the July 8 Instagram post. “In order to build a more equitable, safe and unbiased community, we must first address the times when we have failed to uphold that which we firmly believe in. We are sincerely sorry for any injustices that have occurred under our watch, and will do all we can to prevent more from occurring.”

The College requested that any student who has experienced racism within the campus community complete a bias report so the College can investigate the event.

In addition to the initial statement, on July 13, in an email to the campus community, President Hilary Link and Dean of Institutional Diversity Kristin Dukes announced the Roadmap for *Addressing Systemic Racism & Racial Injustice*, which is the institution’s action plan to address racism on campus.

“We (the administration) want to reiterate that Allegheny College unequivocally condemns racism in any form,” Dukes and Link wrote. “We also recognize that words alone will not suffice. The College has significant work to do in actively confronting racism and supporting our Black community members in tangible ways.”

The action plan was created based on four pillars: access & success, climate & intergroup relations, education & scholarship and institutional viability & vitality. The pillars have goals and guidelines as well.

Access & Success aims to create a more diverse campus community of students and employees. The College has begun to act upon this goal with the Faculty Cohort Hiring Program, which launched fall 2019, the Diversity Teaching Fellowship, which launched spring 2019, and the Inclusive Faculty Recruitment and Search Process changes, which launched fall 2018.

Climate & Intergroup Relations aims to establish a greater sense of belonging and support self-knowledge for the entire campus community, especially with racial healing. The College released the Campus Climate Survey in spring 2018 and again in spring 2019. Also, the College plans to create Community Building Circles for Employees and engage in Dialogues on Racial Healing for students over the summer and for employees during the fall semester.

Education & Scholarship aims to ensure a diverse and inclusive environment with curriculum changes focused on systemic racism and racial injustice. The College has launched the Diversity Audit of Academic Curriculum over the summer and intends to continue it until 2022. For the 2020-2021 academic year, the College has planned the creation of the Diversity Audit of Co-Curricular Programs.

Institutional Viability & Vitality aims to create a community that can understand and address issues of diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice. To sustain this effort, the College created the Trauma-Informed Approach Education for Institutional Leadership, which is a training program for the 2020-2021 academic year. In addition, faculty and staff are required to partake in Diversity Competence Training for All Employees in fall 2020 and Inclusive Teaching Training for Faculty in spring 2020.

Among the allegations, accounts of racial discrimination, tokenism and microaggression within the Fraternity & Sorority Life on campus surfaced on BlackNCAC. On July 12, the official Allegheny College Panhellenic Council Instagram denounced racial discrimination and requested any individual, who has experienced racism or discrimination within Fraternity & Sorority Life to report their experiences to the Panhellenic board via email.

“We acknowledge we have a lot of work to do as an organization to improve and move away from racially discriminatory practices,” wrote the board in an Instagram post. “As we strive toward a more inclusive sorority life at Allegheny, although we cannot speak for each of our individual chapters’ processes, we as a governing body, do hold a responsibility to uphold standards and policies against discriminatory practices.”

In an effort to create a more inclusive environment, the Panhellenic board announced on Instagram that they are adjusting existing programs to include educational resources focused on racism, tokenism and microaggression. In addition to new resources, the Panhellenic board announced that they are creating a system for members to submit racial and discriminatory concerns.

On July 13, Allegheny Student Government President Abdikadir Lugundi, '21, hosted an Instagram Live to discuss the realities of being in a historically white fraternity as a student of color. Lugundi is a member of the Theta Chi fraternity on campus. The Campus was invited to participate during the livestream for an interview with Lugundi.

“When I came to Allegheny College, I did not know anything about Greek life,” Lugundi said. “Everyone was trying to find themselves or be themselves; no one was trying to be another person. They were unique in their own way and I think that is what got me interested (in Greek life) without really knowing I was interested. (Theta Chi) was the first diverse place that I saw at Allegheny.”

During his first year at the College, Theta Chi was not a very reputable fraternity on campus, Lugundi indicated. He, along with his pledge class, acknowledged the work that needed to happen within the fraternity and chose to remain in the brotherhood. While many people questioned why he decided to join the fraternity, especially in light of the reputation that Theta Chi had within the College at the time, he chose to stay. Lugundi felt comfortable with the brotherhood and saw an opportunity to make this organization a more reputable entity on campus.

Theta Chi was becoming one of the most diverse fraternities on campus, Lugundi remarked. He never felt as though he was required to showcase his African heritage but he is aware that tokenism within fraternities exists, he added.

“I knew our chapter was becoming more diverse; we were split between people of color and the white individuals in the fraternity,” Lugundi said. “We had conversations about race and identities while getting to know each other, which is how I knew that achieving diversity can be done through being comfortable. There are no instructions on how to do it, it has to happen naturally.”

Creating a diverse atmosphere is not without its challenges, Lugundi acknowledged. He began working with the administration to create a diversity program to help overcome some of the challenges present and ensure that everyone felt included in Fraternity & Sorority Life on campus. While the pandemic put a halt on the diversity program activities, Lugundi is hopeful that some of the activities planned can continue in the fall semester, despite social distancing measures.

“Once I get this program running, I want people of color to be more comfortable and to try out or venture into Greek life,” Lugundi said. “Greek life can be exclusive but at the same time, everyone should be able to join. People should not shy away because of things that are said but at the same time, make a decision that is right for you.”

No student organization on campus is so exclusive that it limits who can be involved, Lugundi said.

On July 20, the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access and Social Justice Center pledged support to all students of color and affirmed the worth of all BIPOC via their official Instagram page. The IDEAS Center is a major support network for all students of color and contains the student diversity organizations. In addition to efforts within the senior administration to create a more inclusive environment on campus, the IDEAS Center is taking the initiative to create a lasting impact on campus.

“We recognize the performative, the substantive, and the differences between,” the IDEAS center wrote in an Instagram post. “Being performative is short term and well-intended, but being substantive creates real and lasting change. We are focused on substantive change.”

The IDEAS center is dedicated to providing an inclusive and empowering space on campus that advocates on behalf of the under-resourced students. The center encourages students to read *Creating a Shift in Campus Culture*, which details the center’s agenda for ensuring that the campus community reflects and upholds the Allegheny College Statement of Community.

“Creating change takes time, now is a crucial time in continuing to work on the needed change to create a more accepting campus community,” wrote the center. “The work we (the IDEAS center) have done, will continue to do, and commit to moving forward will have a lasting and monumental impact on our campus community.”

On July 22, the IDEAS center and Department of Athletics and Recreation held a Zoom workshop dedicated to racial healing. The IDEAS center has spent the summer working with Athletics and Recreation to provide training specific to cultural humility, allyship and the realities of microaggressions and privilege.

The center’s efforts are widespread throughout the campus community and include diversity

training for Fraternity & Sorority Life and curriculum changes to include courses designed to support BIPOC. The IDEAS center continues to be an open resource for under-resourced students and serves as both an advocate and a mentor.

“The center strives to create a better sense of community and the understanding of the diversity of culture on campus,” wrote the center on Instagram. “Anti-racist work is vital to the success of these goals.”

Students interested in helping create a more inclusive campus environment may join one of the Culture, Identity, & Leadership Coalition organizations, Student Advisory Committee, or a local organization. Students can also volunteer at the IDEAS center, provide feedback to the center and facilitate or co-facilitate a Talk Back Tuesday.

The College adamantly affirms the worth of all BIPOC students, indicated Dukes. Also, the College acknowledges the impact their delay in response had on students and expresses their sincere apologies for any injustice that occurred on campus, Dukes added.

“We recognize that even unintentional actions and inaction can have a detrimental impact on minoritized and marginalized communities,” Dukes wrote in a statement to the Campus. “We are aware of the Instagram account and the allegations posted, and that specific outcomes for each allegation vary, but many have been addressed or are currently being addressed through the bias response and education process.”

[BIPOC students](#) [BlackNCAC](#) [Fraternity and Sorority Life](#) [ideas center](#) [NCAC](#)

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Bree Gray is a sophomore from Washington, Pennsylvania. She is a Global Health Studies major with an Economics minor. This is her first year on staff,...

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