RESOLUTION 2021-012

A RESOLUTION FOR INCREASING BLACK STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION THROUGH SUPPORTIVE NETWORKS

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Sponsor: Executive Committee

WHEREAS the Council of Graduate Students (CGS) is the representative body of all graduate students enrolled at The Ohio State University as established by Article 2, Section 1 of the CGS Constitution; and

WHEREAS the Council or its appointed representative(s) have the power to sit as an advisory agent on behalf of graduate students on all matters brought before personnel, committees, or agencies of The Ohio State University involving the interest of graduate students as established in Article 3 Section 3 of the CGS Constitution; and

WHEREAS Black students enrolled within primarily white institutions (PWIs) lack a strong social support network, both with their peers and faculty mentors, which has been shown to affect both academic success and attrition1; and

WHEREAS Black graduate students at The Ohio State University represent only 7.6% of all graduate student enrollment in 20192; and

WHEREAS, as an underrepresented minority, Black graduate students can find it especially difficult to find mentors within academia, whose support is often crucial for the retention and success of minority students3; and

WHEREAS faculty are not always culturally sensitive, nor do they recognize the colder campus atmosphere Black students experience, even more so in the field of science, where faculty and administrators are more likely to foster toxic ideology of Black students lacking the intellectual capacity to master the field4; and

WHEREAS students of color seek out faculty and staff of color for both academic and emotional support, with research studies indicating Black students largely credited their success to specific Black faculty and staff members in admissions and student services-type departments5; and

WHEREAS, faculty of color often perform service work for minority students without adequate financial compensation or service consideration in promotion and tenure decisions6; and

WHEREAS it is critical to understand the obstacles that hinder the success of this student population, including, but not limited to, difficulty finding a sense of belonging on campus, lack of diversity in faculty, staff, and student population, lack of family and professional support with their academic studies, and financial hardships7; and

2 Graduation Admissions. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://dataviz.rae.osu.edu/cpublic/views/CoalitionDashboards_0/GraduateAdmissions?isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&embed=y
WHEREAS diversity initiatives often work to increase support for Black graduate students through a white lens without considering the unique perspective of underrepresented groups who do not share the same experiences; and

WHEREAS, to counteract this and fully and effectively support Black graduate students, Black-to-Black mentorship is essential; and

WHEREAS, to be successful, mentorship must be maintained throughout the first year via academic advising, career counseling, student workshops, and targeted mentorship opportunities.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students advocates for a university-wide program for incoming Black graduate students led by trained faculty and staff of color; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this program will enroll students across all disciplines and recruit faculty and staff to be involved from various areas around the university to create a university-wide support system for Black graduate students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that continuous engagement in the first year and through the duration of a student’s graduate education be established, modeled after similar programs such as the Knights-Hennessy Scholars program at Stanford University⁸, in which Black graduate students can enroll in the program during their first year on campus and have access to faculty and staff of color across the university through regular meetings, workshops, and sponsored events; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the established program should provide academic mentoring and socialization, cross-disciplinary networks, and career coaching; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such a program is to provide a community of Black scholars with formal structure and access to concrete advice, skills, and resources that take into account the history, culture, and challenges of Black individuals within academia; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this program should seek to enroll Black graduate students who are recipients of the University’s diversity fellowships or other university fellowships such as the William E. Nelson Research and Travel Grant⁹; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the program can additionally provide grants for academic travel or professional development on a competitive basis to enrolled scholars; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED for consecutive years in which the student is enrolled in a graduate program, Black graduate students will be provided with academic development, career coaching, and opportunities for mentoring incoming graduate students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this program will have an additional focus of guiding Black graduate students into careers in research and academia; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this program should build off of existing programming, as modeled by Preparing Future Faculty Fellows¹⁰ operating with Black Graduate & Professional Student Caucus; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that students outside of the first year or dissertation years can act as mentees to incoming students and provide invaluable insights about navigating academia as a Black graduate student and allow for professional development experience; and

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⁸ https://knight-hennessy.stanford.edu/
⁹ https://aaas.osu.edu/about/giving
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED this program would require reasonable monetary compensation for participating faculty and formal recognition of their service; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this mentorship program should be integrated into the service component for tenure track faculty as a means to firmly root the university initiative as well as to ensure recognition is given to such service work; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students formally recognizes that of the factors proven to improve the retention of students of color at Ohio State, direct efforts to be more inclusive of students, faculty, and staff of color and initiatives targeted to retain individuals of color are necessary11; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students will direct Black graduate students to participate in this initiative; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students desires the Ohio State University to identify resources and faculty to propagate the implementation of this program; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Council of Graduate Students directs its President and Vice President to distribute this resolution to The Ohio State University President Kristina M. Johnson, Executive Vice President and Provost Bruce McPherson, Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate School Alicia Bertone, Vice President for Student Life Melissa Shivers, Vice President for Government Affairs Stacy Rastaukas, and the Chair of the Council on Student Affairs Jordan Vadja, and all other relevant leadership and authorities of The Ohio State University and its partners.

Approved: Yes/No

Date: __11/6/20__

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Stephen J. Post, President

Council of Graduate Students at The Ohio State University