



*Union 344 | (940) 565-3850 | sga@unt.edu*

August 22, 2019

Mean Green Family,

Over the past weeks, months, and years, communities across Texas and the entirety of the United States have suffered tragedies at the hands of rampant gun violence and hate fueled brutality. The Office of the UNT Student Government Association would like to affirm our devotion to creating a campus community that goes beyond educational priorities by striving to ensure the safety and wellbeing of every student on our campus. We are proud of the efforts our University has taken and recognize steps are still needed to ensure a safer tomorrow. Student voices are essential in the conversation regarding gun violence prevention and we encourage you to contact us and get involved with our numerous initiatives and committees concerning student safety.

If you ever feel that your safety is threatened, please reach out to one of the various UNT and City of Denton departments below:

Emergency Telephone Number: 911

UNT Police Department Non-Emergency Line: 940-565-3000

City of Denton Non-Emergency Line: 940-349-8181

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Crisis Text Line: Text CONNECT to 741741

UNT Counseling and Testing Services: 940-565-2741

UNT Dean of Students Office: 940-565-2648

As students return to the University of North Texas campus, the Office of the Student Government Association would like to welcome you back as we look toward a year of great academic growth and personal success. We are here for you and together we will prevail.

Respectfully,

**Student Government Association Executive Board**

University of North Texas



*Union 344 | (940) 565-3850 | [sga@unt.edu](mailto:sga@unt.edu)*

October 30, 2019

Mean Green Family,

As you all may know, or have heard we've had some horrific events occur near us this past weekend including the shooting at Texas A&M Commerce (TAMUC) Homecoming. While it was an off campus event, many of their students as well as our students were affected and are still going through having to process all that has happened.

As the caring institution that we are, I believe it is imperative that the University of North Texas stands with Commerce and all who were affected as a result of the shooting. With SGA and the Black Student Union, we are hosting a gathering on **Thursday, October 31st at 1:00pm** in the area outside of the Union Starbucks where we will be having a moment of silence and would also invite students, faculty, staff, and administrators to attend. I believe this is the time to show student support by being present and being a guide to directing students to the many resources we have to offer to help get students through this painful and difficult time.

I also know it is extremely important for as many people as possible to make a statement in their spheres of influence or various departments to recognize that this was a tragedy that affected many students and comes at a bad time as this is also our Homecoming week which means a lot of students are already on edge and we should emphasize the many safety precautions students can take as well as this campus can ensure.

Don't hesitate to reach out to [sga@unt.edu](mailto:sga@unt.edu) if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

**Yolian Ogbu**

President, Student Government Association



Mean Green Family,

On the evening of Thursday, November 7th, during the “When Hate Comes to Campus” panel, UNT System Assistant General Counsel, Caitlin Sewell, stated the n-word in its entirety to the crowd.

“If I said something offensive - you know, you can say a lot of offensive things in here because it’s impossible to talk about the First Amendment without saying horrible things. Um, you know, **‘You’re just a dumb n--r and I hate you.’** That alone, that’s protected speech.”

The explicit use of the racial slur was beyond shocking. Despite the phrase being used as a hypothetical in an educational setting, the cultural incompetence and ignorance was displayed in full light. While Sewell elected to censor other words, for example by using the term “f-word”, there was no hesitation nor immediate remorse about using the n-word. Additionally, in an attempt to apologize after multiple students and audience members called Sewell out at the event, she stated “I have never said that word in a *public* setting.” Which negates the question - why does the differentiation on the setting in which the epithet is used is as an excuse for Sewell?

Simply put, Sewell displayed a clear lack of understanding of the long-standing history of the racial epithet and its impact on the diverse array of students, faculty, staff, and all those who were present at the event. Furthermore, what is beyond frightening is that as this individual failed to understand the cultural and structural burdens that are unduly placed on the very communities she is paid to defend on legal matters as an Assistant General Counsel for the UNT System.

While as of the morning of November 8th, 2019, Caitlin Sewell’s resignation is effective immediately by notification of a joint message from the Chancellor and the President, this incident highlights the need for institutional change across UNT System.

Therefore, the Student Government Association of the University of North Texas, in conjunction with the UNT Black Student Union and UNT’s chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, call for the following demands:

- 1) We **DEMAND** that the UNT System creates and enforces comprehensive racial awareness and inclusion curriculum throughout all campus departments and units, mandatory for all faculty, staff, and administration. This curriculum must be vetted, maintained, and overseen by a board comprised of students, staff, and faculty of color.
- 2) We **DEMAND** that the university institute a mandatory cultural competency course required of all students either in a first year seminar or a stand alone course integrated within Orientation and Transition Programs.
- 3) We **DEMAND** that the university creates a specific outline to address diversity and inclusion practices in the strategic plan that will increase retention rates for marginalized students, sustain diversity curriculum and training, and promote a more safe and inclusive campus.

- 4) We **DEMAND** that by the academic year 2021-2022 the University of North Texas increases the percentage of black, brown, and other marginalized identities among the faculty and staff campus-wide to match the demographic representation of our student population.
- 5) We **DEMAND** the University will allocate new financial resources towards the expansion of the multicultural center and the entirety of the Division of Equity and Diversity. We believe our students deserve a building just like the greek life center to accommodate the needs of individual minority groups.

A finalized strategic plan of demands will be released by Monday, November 11 and presented to the President of UNT Denton Neal Smatresk.

We are students. It is not our responsibility to have the knowledge and expertise on how to execute these demands - that's what we pay you for. Will the University once again stand for slogans and promises? Or will the University stand for its students? This is not a teaching moment, but one that deserves swift action.

Respectfully,

**The UNT Student Government Association Executive Board**

Yolian Ogbu, *President*

Hillary Shah, *Vice President*

Hanlyn Tyler, *Chief of Staff*

Noah Hutchinson, *Communications Director*

Allison Quisenberry, *Outreach Director*

Brightyn Patterson, *Strategic Planning Director*

Deana Ayers, *Governmental Affairs Director*

Joshua Kilbane, *Student Allocations Director*

Fatim Karamoko, *Student Allocations Director*



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**August 20, 2019**

## **Denton students take action in the global climate strike September 20**

***The University of North Texas and Texas Woman's University Student Government Associations call for students to demand change.***

Denton, Texas -- On September 20, three days before the UN Climate Summit in NYC, young people and adults will strike all across the US and world to demand transformative action be taken to address the climate crisis.

The Student Government Association (SGA) of the University of North Texas (UNT) and Texas Woman's University (TWU) are now taking action and joining the movement. As the official voice of the two school's undergraduate student body, the Association's strongly believes in their duty to provide a platform for student voices to be heard and facilitate much needed conversations pertaining to the future directly impacting today's students.

The Climate Strike is a demonstration of youth activism celebrating the strides the Denton community has taken and acknowledging the next steps still needed to be taken towards alleviating the imminent threats of the global climate crisis. Speakers of the event will include various student leaders, professors, scientists, and community leaders from the Denton area and feature UNT Undergraduate Student Body President Yolian Ogbu, TWU SGA President Myah Anderson, Education Coordinator for the Department of Sustainability at the City of Denton Vanessa Ellison, and Denton City Councilwoman Deb Arntoir.

The event will begin at 10am as students march from their respective campuses to the Denton Courthouse on the Denton Square. Students, faculty, staff, and administration are welcomed to take part in the movement and assemble on the Library Mall of the UNT campus and in front of the Mary Evelyn Blagg-Huey Library of the TWU campus. Speakers and performers will begin the series of events on the steps of the Denton Courthouse at 10:30am. A finalized schedule of events and lineup of speakers and presenters is anticipated to be released by August 31.

Students and attendees are encouraged to join the conversation using the hashtag #DentonClimateStrike and follow the movement on Twitter @Denton4Climate for official updates.

"The climate crisis will not wait any longer. Join us in the fight to make our voices heard and live to see a future for ourselves and the generations to come," Yolian Ogbu

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Julio Lopez, TWU SGA Vice President of Public Relations, jlopez42@twu.edu



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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR EMBARGOED RELEASE UNTIL**  
**6:00 AM, NOVEMBER 14, 2019**

## **UNT students plan sit-in on Board of Regents meeting November 14**

***University of North Texas Student Government Association calls on UNT System to meet proposed demands in light of recent events.***

Denton, Texas – Following the resignation of the Assistant General Counsel, Caitlin Sewell, the Student Government Association (SGA) of the University of North Texas, in conjunction with the UNT Black Student Union and UNT's chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, called for five demands to improve the black student experience and to create a more inclusive campus for all.

We are once again calling for action – action from the UNT student body. On Thursday, November 14, day one of the UNT Board of Regents meeting, students from across the North Texas campus will organize a sit-in in light of the most recent episode of racially antagonistic and racially biased incidents on the UNT Denton campus. We are calling on students to wear black and assemble in the Org Space, Union 340, at 1:00 PM. We will then proceed to walk to Union 333 to sit-in on the meeting at 1:15 PM.

On Friday, November 15, SGA President, Yolian Ogbu, and other student leaders within the Black Student Coalition will present to the Board of Regents. The comments will outline the Strategic Plan for Improving the Black Student Experience and how the plan intertwines with agenda item #22 in regards to approving the increase in Student Services Fees.

We believe these demands, when enacted, will help to achieve a truly welcoming climate at UNT where diversity is embraced and supported; and all students can succeed, be valued, and work as a community. Racial tensions are being exposed and addressed at many colleges and universities across the United States, and unfortunately, UNT has not been immune to these issues that are plaguing other institutions of higher education.

We want to send the message loud and clear: students are watching. The future of this University depends on the actions taken by the Board of Regents and the entirety of the leadership of the UNT system.

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*The Student Government Association is the official voice of the undergraduate student body at the University of North Texas. As an organization, we are committed to creating platforms to make each student's opinions and concerns heard on an administrative and institutional level. For more information please visit [sga.unt.edu](http://sga.unt.edu).*

# **STRATEGIC PLAN FOR IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCE FOR BLACK STUDENTS AT UNT**

Dear President Smatresk and Chancellor Roe,

In light of the recent racially antagonistic and racially biased incidents on the UNT Denton campus, on behalf of our peers, we respectfully submit for your review and response, our demands contained within the accompanying documents. We believe these demands, when enacted, will help to achieve a truly welcoming climate at UNT where diversity is embraced and supported; and all students can succeed, be valued, and work as a community. Racial tensions are being exposed and addressed at many colleges and universities across the United States, and unfortunately, UNT has not been immune to these issues that are plaguing other institutions of higher education.

We stand as black students in requesting that our University lives up to their stated values of inclusion by supporting these values with more than rhetoric, and do so with concrete deeds and actions

We are more than willing to work with UNT Administration in achieving the outcomes we all desire to make our institution the best in the country. We hope the UNT administration is also willing to work with us to achieve this mutual outcome.

Lastly, we reserve the right to amend and add to our demands as circumstances may warrant.

Respectfully Submitted,

Yolian Ogbu, *Student Government Association President*

Cameron Combs, *Black Student Union President*

Jameriya Owens, *NAACP President*

Concerned Members of the Black Community at the University of North Texas

**Preamble**

In 1956, Irma E.L Sephas was the first African-American student admitted to the University of North Texas. Over the past 63 years, the university has made strides to create an inclusive campus community. Today, in 2019, the Black Community still faces a campus climate of institutional bias. This bias is evident in racially insensitive events that have occurred in the past three years alone on our campus. Black students, faculty, and staff contribute too much time, effort, and financial resources to attend a university that fosters this type of environment. Although student frustrations have been sparked on social media, many of the sentiments held by Black and minority students are longstanding and much deeper. UNT still has lots of room for improvement: increasing the recruitment and retention of Black administrators, faculty, staff, curating a redesign of university-wide curriculum dedicated to the education of social and cultural competency for all students, and committing more resources and financial support for Black and minority students.

Minority students make up 53% of the UNT student body, meaning that we are moving towards “minority serving institution” status. As we get closer to his designation, the university must seriously reflect on the past and future, and transition toward being proactive stewards of education dedicated to making intentional efforts to create an educational community that values and support us.

In order to address these concerns and more, We, the Black Community of the University of North Texas, in order to form a more united and culturally sensitive campus; to implement changes in school policy and legislation for the betterment of the Black student experience; to provide a framework to eliminate institutional bias, advocate for cultural and racial education, and to promote unity amongst all members of the UNT community, propose this Strategic Plan:

## **Executive Summary**

1. The UNT System must create and enforce comprehensive racial awareness and inclusion curriculum throughout all campus departments and units, mandatory for all faculty, staff, and administration. This curriculum must be vetted, maintained, and overseen by a board comprised of students, staff, and faculty of color.
2. The university will institute a mandatory cultural competency course required of all students either in a first year seminar or a stand alone course integrated within Orientation and Transition Programs.
3. The university will create a specific outline to address diversity and inclusion practices in the strategic plan that will increase retention rates for marginalized students, sustain diversity curriculum and training, and promote a more safe and inclusive campus.
4. The University of North Texas will increase the percentage of black, brown, and other marginalized identities among the faculty and staff campus-wide to match the demographic representation of our student population.
5. The University will allocate new financial resources towards the expansion of the multicultural center and the entirety of the Division of Equity and Diversity. We believe our students deserve a building just like the greek life center to accommodate the needs of individual minoritized groups.

1. The UNT System must create and enforce comprehensive racial awareness and inclusion curriculum throughout all campus departments and units, mandatory for all faculty, staff, and administration. This curriculum must be vetted, maintained, and overseen by a board comprised of students, staff, and faculty of color.
  - a. **Curriculum redesign**
    - i. We request the introduction of diverse (i.e., address issues of domestic diversity, inclusion, racism, etc.) cases, teaching notes and lectures to UNT's undergraduate and graduate curricula. These teaching tools should be made available to faculty, staff and administration so that they can be leveraged across the campus, and perhaps most importantly, in the classroom.
    - ii. We request the utilization of orientation as a platform for not only open discussion, but also to set explicit standards for students to follow in terms of diversity and inclusion; this should be made a priority alongside other discussions such as alcohol.
  - b. We request the redesign of the required course programs so that UNT's commitment to diversity and inclusion is institutionalized across the curriculum.
  - c. We also request that each department/unit undergoes mandatory cultural humility or bias awareness training at least yearly
2. The university will institute a mandatory cultural competency course required of all students either in a first year seminar or a stand alone course integrated within Orientation and Transition Programs.
  - a. We request the creation of the First-Year Seminar as a key touch point to include more conversations around diversity, inclusion, socio-economic diversity, etc.; to promote cultural awareness, difference, acceptance, and sensitivity.
  - b. Similar to Alcohol-Edu that students are required to take prior to coming to UNT, they can take an online "Diversity-Edu" course in the same manner
  - c. Pair an online module with in-class dialogue
3. The university will create a specific outline to address diversity and inclusion practices in the strategic plan that will increase retention rates for marginalized students, sustain diversity curriculum and training, and promote a more safe and inclusive campus.
4. The University of North Texas increases the percentage of black, brown, and other marginalized identities among the faculty and staff campus-wide to match the demographic representation of our student population.
  - a. **Faculty recruitment, training, and evaluation**

- i. We request a funded commitment to recruit, retain and promote more domestic diverse faculty, specifically those of Black/African-American, and Latinx backgrounds
    - ii. We request the resources to train faculty who are not yet prepared to be involved in such courses to be able to do so, and to allow for team-taught courses that would allow faculty to share approaches and knowledge across disciplines. We also request the resources to create warehouses and databases of texts, cases and other resources to support these courses and the new, diverse curricula.
    - iii. We request that the diversity competency be embedded into formal evaluations of faculty, staff and administration. If UNT truly values this competency, key stakeholders should be assessed on this competency.
  - b. It must clearly be outlined in the strategic plan the commitment to increase black faculty/staff/administrators by at least 10% by Fall 2025
  - c. UNT will increase the amount of minority administrators. Black administrators serve as advocates for Black students, and demonstrate a good faith effort by the university towards improving the campus' racial climate.
    - i. The Board of Regents will institute a Student Affairs Committee with a diverse array of student representatives from across the UNT system with one representative dedicated to diversity and inclusion of the system
      - 1. This representative's responsibilities will include, but are not limited to:
        - a. Meeting with presidents of minority, cultural and Greek letter organizations and reporting findings about the undergraduate cultural climate to the Student Affairs committee and the rest of the Board of Regents at every meeting
5. The University will allocate new financial resources towards the expansion of the multicultural center and the entirety of the Division of Equity and Diversity. We believe our students deserve a building just like the greek life center to accommodate the needs of individual minoritized groups.
- a. Expanding the Multicultural Center to the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs.

In conclusion, reports of progress made on these demands will be presented to Black student leaders and representatives from the Black Alumni Association three times a year. Additionally, an external audit of the university's cultural climate will be conducted every three years. The university will utilize all necessary resources, in order to truly become the

world- changing institution it strives to be. The university needs to make all necessary investments in financial and human capital in order to adopt policies that will support the recommendations presented within this document; as well as those communicated through future interactions with Black student leaders and alumni. The University will also institute a Black inclusion taskforce that is responsible for seeing the above action items through.