



MARYLAND INSTITUTE  
COLLEGE OF ART

Memorandum

Date: December 12, 2014

To: Members of the MICA Community

From: Samuel Hoi

Re: BSU Open Letter

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Dear MICA students, faculty and staff,

Last Wednesday, the Black Student Union (BSU) delivered an open letter to the administration of the College. The letter eloquently and passionately calls for a campus dialog to further an authentic culture of diversity here at MICA. It presents nine requests related to the enhancement of diversity efforts on campus in the interest of supporting the welfare, safety and success of students of all backgrounds. In the context of the current national discussion on race and violence, as well as the recent hate speech incident at Leake Hall, it advocates for an appropriate focus on the rights and needs of students of color and particularly those of African-American students.

Simultaneously, the 2015 class of the MFA in Community Arts program (MFACA) wrote a collective letter in solidarity with the BSU and the Office of Diversity and Intercultural Development to advance the same cause.

Both letters, and other related campus communications, can be viewed via this link – [www.mica.edu/letterstotheresident](http://www.mica.edu/letterstotheresident)

The BSU open letter asks for a public response from the administration within the first two weeks of the Spring 2015 semester. I will take that time to prepare a thoughtful response to the BSU letter and the similarly-spirited MFACA letter. A swift and facile promise from me alone is not the goal. To achieve broad engagement and meaningful action, I will use the coming weeks to generate a commitment of MICA's board, faculty and staff to participate with students on a campus-wide dialog as called for by the BSU open letter.

A partnership spirit was strongly evident in the BSU letter delivery event, with me

meeting the BSU student leaders and a sizable and diverse group of student, faculty, and staff supporters at the half-way point of their march across campus to present the letter. Indeed, the work ahead on this topic will need to be collaborative; it also has to be thoughtful, transformative, and considerate of the interest of all students without losing sight of the specific reality and needs of students of color and within that group, the African-American students.

I am extremely proud of the student leadership that has drawn attention to such an important and timely matter. The support for our students from many faculty and staff members is a testament to the MICA community's ability to come together to support each other. It bodes well for our willingness to engage in a collective dialog, reflection and ultimately action to foster an environment that is a model of inclusion.

I close by mentioning that diversity is an institutional priority identified prior to the Leake Hall incident and the BSU letter. The Fall Graduate Students Town Hall discussion led to the formation of a Diversity Forum in order to look at diversity issues more broadly, and a cross section of faculty, staff and students on both the graduate and undergraduate levels have been involved. Administrative leadership has also contemplated how to initiate an audit of the College's diversity support. The plan has been to use the Spring 2015 semester to prepare for a year-long examination of comprehensive diversity efforts in the 2015-2106 academic year. Such ongoing initiatives will dovetail with the work to emerge from the public response to the BSU and MFACA letters.

Sincerely,  
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