

The Council

Thursday 6 November 2014

8:15pm

Title	Report: Black Members Officer
Author	Angela Bennett
Purpose	For consideration and approval. Angela will present her report and questions may be taken if time permits. The report is formally accepted by a simple majority vote. There are some recommendations which are laid out at the foot of the report – Standing Orders require that prior to accepting the report, the Council votes on each recommendation as if it were its own Policy Motion.
URC	14110610a

Purpose of this report

- 1) To advise of a campaign which has started to highlight raising awareness of the effect the education attainment gap has on BME students. The campaign will be run internally and externally of Birkbeck College, undertaken in conjunction with the wider education establishment forums and the National Union of Students (NUS).
- 2) To increase student accessibility to the information technology at the College
- 3) To advise of a campaign to be run raising awareness of designing out race discrimination in our communities / and to highlight the need for zero tolerance, (particularly in Gloucestershire) where Asian sisters have been physically beaten and verbally abused by their racist neighbours.

Action proposed and undertaken

The Black Students' Committee has set 2 meeting dates to hold an AGM on 14/11/2014 (Stratford Campus -6:30pm – 9pm) and 21/1/2014 at (Bloomsbury Campus 6:30pm to 9pm). It is at that meeting we will discuss progress on the campaign on line and held in person to sign petitions, and the next stages to bring our Birkbeck IT 24 hr room access back into use for the students.

Work in preparation for a meeting with Professor David Latchman has been undertaken for him to attend a prospective meeting date in the future with BME students in attendance.

Students will require a response to their concerns about BBK's lack of openness in the provision of statistics and information about examinations and essays that should be available to students about their academic achievements/non achievements.

Students will also require a response from Professor Latchman also as to why there was no official consultation under the College's public equality duty to consult on such a drastic change to remove over night 24 hr IT access. Again, we require Professor Latchman to attend a meeting to address the students on the issue.

In addition, our campaign has been focussing on and preparing to work with external specialist BME agencies to boost the achievement capabilities and life chances of BME students.

A questionnaire has been prepared to be sent out shortly to the wide cohort of students on the subject of the academic underachievement of black students. The outcome of the report from statistical information gauged, it is hoped, will lead to a programme of equalities action by the College and the Students Union to change policies, procedures and introduce new systems of increasing BME attainment to much improved levels.

The case of the sisters in Gloucester who were subjected to the race hate crimes from their neighbours was due to be heard at Crown Court 29/9/2014 and this was postponed. The opportunity now exists for BBK to unite internally and externally to the College to mount the "zero tolerance" campaign regarding racism in our communities.

Conclusion

The attainment gap is continually widening between the BME and non BME students and the reasons need to be thoroughly investigated as work in progress. Not enough is being done to tackle the problem and the reasons as to why this is, is unknown.

The College appears to continue to ignore the situation of the closure of the 24 IT rooms, and currently have no intention to draw upon the current disadvantages to students and retrospectively undertake a proper consultation process

The College cohort and external to the College having signed our online and in person petitions are solidly supporting the race hate crime case.

Recommendation

The Black Member's Officer must seek joint collaborative working with the other education establishments and the NUS Black Students' Officer to make the campaign of black student underachievement grab wider headlines as it moves through each stage of development. BME students must have their needs assessed robustly through specific equalities measures to reduce the academic failings. The Black

Students' Officer will be using the time to scrutinise policies and reports which could affect BME students in procedural unfairness and/or disadvantages against BME students. The Black Members' Officer must be in a position to sit on boards to monitor the equalities provisions and their successes and/or failures.

We need to keep up the momentum and attend the up and coming race hate trial at Crown Court in Gloucester in the future to show support and solidarity.

We will give the College ultimatum to re-open 24 hour IT cases and consider what administrative course of action we must undertake by seeking legal advice.

Impact of this report

This report has no financial or legal implications, no inequality effects against any party. By accepting this report, we can begin to take steps to secure equality is met across the board in higher and further education, colleges, unions and cutting across into wider society for BME students and society as a whole.