Op-Ed: Meeting MIBU's Demands

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Featured Authors
The Multi Identity Based Union (MIBU) is an active, on-campus collective of eight affinity groups, including the Coalition of Multiracial and Biracial Students, the Black Student Union, the now dissolved Latin American Heritage Student Organization, Jewish Student Union, Asian Pacific Islander Student Collective, Association of Student Athletes of Color, PRISM and Visible Spectrum.

On March 2, MIBU released a set of demands that was addressed directly to the Crawford administration and is currently accessible to the public. Two days later, on March 4, it was amended to include Demand 11 which concludes, contextualizes and reinforces the fundamental distrust between the current administration and the collective student bodies of color on campus.

Link to Formal Demands:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Z8BlughkZsHSbQ8bTcfVRZBkYJx9jyFm

MIBU’s recent release of demands was not the first of its kind. There have been other previous demands made by other student organizations on campus that have been left unanswered, such as those of the Advocates of Institutional Change in 2016 and that of the Coalition Against Injustice and Racism in 2008. Such events and the involved alumni are short-termed and respectfully referred to as the UPS 3.

In Demand 11, the authors explain the events surrounding the UPS 3 and by doing so, they mark the history that defines the University’s culture around student activism, negotiability of student rights and continued neglect of physical safety and justice for vulnerable students.

Zeno Deleon Guerrero, a fourth year student and one of eight Demand Authors, said, “The school has done concrete acts of harm towards the UPS 3 … MIBU” and other students of color “are the inheritors of history.”
refused to reckon nearly a decade’s worth of continued marginalization of non-white students.

The timing of this release was well-executed.

During the past few weeks, students received formal invitations to meet the candidates for the currently empty seat, Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity (VPIED). The school organized open student forums where they could see and hear the candidates themselves. These candidates were recruited by a third-party search entity called WittKeiffer, excluding the popular candidate Dr. Dexter Gordon, who currently teaches in the AFAM Department.

Link to official timeline of the VPIED job search:
https://www.pugetsound.edu/vpdi-search/hiring-timeline/
perfect candidate when the man most fit for the job, Gordon, has already volunteered himself for service.

Deleon Geurrero said, “When the answer is right in front of you … do you want to step in front of that?”

On one hand, a national search, like the affirmative process that the Crawford administration underwent, functions to avoid the concentration of promoting only individuals that work within an institution by quite literally opening the game to anyone and everyone in the United States.

On the other, however, internal appointments are nothing new. In fact, Demand 1 reveals that three white faculty members have already been internally promoted to their current leadership positions.

"The pressures upon a president to lead the varied constituents of the institution are compounded by the need to raise funds and run a successful business enterprise. In this 45-minute interview with host Rob Zinkan of Higher Ed Live, WittKieffer senior partner Dennis Barden explores the complexities of choosing a president in a time of unprecedented change and upheaval."

- WittKieffer

Briefly, Demand 1 addresses the following two statements. First, people of color who spoke with “critical integrity” of the University departed from the institution with their expertise devalued. Second, leading interrogation of recognized through promotions
Gordon is fit to serve as VPIED, according to MIBU, because he witnessed these departures and presently upholds the standard for questioning and critiquing race issues on campus.

The connection between Demand 1 and Demand 11 lays the foundation for understanding the existent distrust between non-white students and the larger predominantly white institution.

To draw directly from MIBU’s ending statement, this affirmative process aimed to legitimize the VPIED position and preserve its relevance within this institution. However, MIBU was crystal clear in its demands that they do not seek relevance arbitrarily. They sought continuity and safety that will be ensured by a trusted individual.
Deleon Guerrero feared that if a candidate besides Gordon were to be elected, then the first few months or even years of tenure would be largely of catch-up, as opposed to the innate knowledge that Gordon currently possesses.

He was doubtful that the University would choose to share, or “reckon” as he said, with its history involving student activism.

In this way, MIBU holds that this national search would actually be detrimental in the fostering of diversity and safety amongst affinity groups on-campus.

The Official MIBU Demands address other pertinent issues, including the expansions of communal and living spaces on-campus, of decolonialist resources in curriculum and of Indigenous courses, in addition to the VPIED search.

Learn more in depth about MIBU’s advocacy and aims for sustainable continuity by:

1. Reading their demands, in full. Available here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Z8BlughkZsHSbQ8bTcfVRZBkYJx9jyFm

2. Signing their petitions in support of these demands. Available here: https://linktr.ee/mibu

Next week, on Tuesday March 16, MIBU will be hosting an event that is open to the public, “MIBU Demands: A Reflection”. There, students will share their sentiments, experiences and inspirations, concerning the construction of the Demands. The Zoom link is available here: https://linktr.ee/mibu

Come through.
Devastation from 2020 Fires

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Written by Anny Schmidt, Staff Writer

In August of 2020 the entire West Coast lit up in flames. Jokes about the West becoming the Fire Nation from “Avatar: The Last Airbender,” were made for a few months, but these jokes were nothing compared to the actual carnage that was brought upon the West. These devastating fires were fueled by lightning and high winds. Millions of acres of land were devastated along the West Coast.

According to Zoe Kern, a fourth year from Bend, Oregon, “We had really bad fires the past few years. I think nothing can really prepare you for the consequences and carnage left by the fires, or the fear of your house being burned down.” Tens of thousands of people lost their homes during the fire.

Another fourth year, Rachel Jackson, said, “The fires this year were expected, but I don’t think they were necessarily expected to be as awful as they were. The type of lightning-caused fires were less common before and the idea that there was a new kind of scary fire definitely made everything very overwhelming and hard to believe.”
Because there are some areas in the country that are prone to burn each year, there are often procedures put in place to prepare for these devastations. According to Jackson, her family does have a plan for evacuation. “My grandmother lives near us and we coordinate with her every year to re-establish our plan for how she can safely be connected with us before we all have to leave.” Jackson also spoke about how she keeps a small bag in her room with backup clothes, blankets, toiletries, food and other emergency equipment in case there is a need to evacuate. News of the fires was everywhere. Jackson said that the best way to be prepared is to know what your zone number is, to have an evacuation plan and to not let your gas get too low so that when you’re evacuating you don’t have to make any stops.

The smoke spread all the way to the East Coast and made the outside look like the apocalypse was coming. “My family and I were stuck inside for two weeks and couldn’t see the sun for longer,” Kern stated. When the smoke cleared, and the fires were put out, all that was left was ash and rubble.

“It was heartbreaking to see chimneys where there used to be houses, carnage where there used to be forest, and empty shells where bars and restaurants used to stand,” Kern said. “So many familiar places were wiped out so easily and quickly, it felt very surreal. It’s terrifying to think that it could only get worse.”
Anny Schmidt, Staff Writer

Anny is an English major and an Education Studies minor. She is from Davis, CA, and currently resides there. She enjoys various types of writing.

Features: Advocates for Detained Voices

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Written by Chloe Daugherty-Brunak, Staff Writer

Advocates for Detained Voices (ADV) was founded in 2014 by Puget Sound student Amanda Davis (2014 alum), who had been the ASUPS student body president the year before. The Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) is just 10 minutes from our campus. The detention center is one of the largest ICE facilities in the U.S. and has a long and horrific history of human rights abuses to those detained inside.

The club is a student solidarity group focused on the racist and colonial immigration system in the U.S. and its presence in Tacoma, specifically at the NWDC. They support people organizing inside of the detention center by attending events and boosting actions coordinated by La Resistencia, a grassroots community group led by undocumented people and people who are detained.

Pretty early on in the club’s history, the students led a protest against Driscoll’s, the fruit company, in solidarity with migrant farmworkers. In the past years, ADV has organized campus lectures and protests, gone to Tacoma city council meetings, created a zine and launched a #NoTechForICE Amazon boycott campaign on campus.

The NWDC itself is the fifth largest ICE detention center in the United States. It opened in 2004 with a 500 person capacity and has since expanded to a maximum capacity of 1,500.
the neighboring property, formerly a coal gasification plant. The land has since been flagged as a toxic superfund site, and less than 50 meters away from a major e-waste recycler whose latest fire was in September 2019 (no detained people were evacuated).

People who are detained at the NWDC are subjected to inhuman conditions including rotting food, maggots, dirty clothes and being forced to work for $1 a day.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, detainees have not been provided with proper PPE, guards do not always wear masks, people are unable to socially distance and information on their health is withheld from detainees. In addition, ICE uses harmful chemicals categorized as “pesticides” as a response to Covid-19, which gives people who are detained nosebleeds, rashes and eye damage.

Those who are detained have launched numerous hunger strikes to protest treatment and demand release and often are met with retaliation including transfer to solitary confinement. People who are detained have repeatedly made their opposition to their incarceration clear through different forms of protests, such as hunger strikes and work stoppages.

The ADV club raised over $3,000 last semester for La Resistencia—solely through students accepting payments on Venmo.

Nola Thury is one of the leaders of ADV and is the student who coordinated the funds that were raised last semester. Thury said that this semester, students have decided to do work through ASUPS, specifically regarding the private banning prisons in the Washington state bill, which just passed in the house of Washington, moving on to the Senate. The goal is to ban private prisons, stop funding in 2024 and start shutting it down.

Thury said the group is really hoping to do more campus action, especially amidst the pandemic, and wants to work on listening to the voices of undocumented students and students of color. They have plans to put up a mural that was made when the club was founded—at the end of spring semester—and that has been approved to go in the library, as well as
Thury said, “It has been really gratifying to have been viscerally part of this community. As organizers and student activists—we need people who are taking sustained action on behalf of other students.”

In relation to the prime motivator for students to get out in protest, particularly in light of the Black Lives Matter movements this past summer, Thury said, “Sometimes your motivation can be rooted in anger, or community, but it can also be because it is a space where you feel like you are a part of something. Although guilt can make people start coming to the meetings, the resulting, community, hope and compassion that comes out of these meetings can be the best motivator to continue to stay involved.”

Ultimately, this keeps people doing this impossible work—as they are trying to hamper a system that’s ingrained and invisible.

Thury said that students are, “trying to move resources and get people involved—fly under the radar—just because our own students—who are largely White, and middle class—are not impacted, is a privilege and it is something we need to be aware of.”

ADV hosts zoom meetings every other week on Thursdays, at 4pm.
Chloe Daughtery-Brunak, Staff Writer

Chloe Brunak is an IPE and Politics and Government major. She is from Portland, Oregon, and is currently residing there. She enjoys running and playing clarinet.