

Bowdoin College Black Alumni Association
Sunday, March 13, 2022 Minutes
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM EDT

Attendance: 41 members of the Black alumni diaspora

I. Welcome

Praise Hall '20, Secretary

II. State of the School Remarks, followed by Q&A

President Clayton Rose

President Rose provided an update of DEI efforts at the college. **Please find the full announcements attached below.** Following President Rose's updates, member of the BCBA community asked the following questions during a Q&A:

Q: What are your challenges coming from the state? regionally? parents?

A (President Rose): As a private institution- we don't really face issues from the political side of things. Maine is really two states; from mid coast south very blue but up 30 minutes north becomes very red. When we have a republican governor that was opposed to DEI but didn't really affect us. Now have a democratic governor and house. Additionally the business class in Maine is very committed to this work.

There are a handful of parents and alumnus who think this work is not what we should be doing- This happens in all that we do. I've been clear that this is who we are and what we're doing. The bigger issue we face is the well meaning desire of the vast community to see the work done but 1) they don't know how to do it (well meaning liberal white men especially and white women) 2) cancel culture and 3) the reckoning that comes in facing what are going to have to give up in order to really do this work

Lastly, there are fissures amongst our students groups of color and people who are hoping to exploit these tensions.

A (Benji Douglas): People have an idea of what they think our community should be. A lot of staff in the 30-31 are in the category where they are a bit more resistant - trying to bring them along and not be so defensive so that they don't feel like they are losing but that they are gaining. People want change, but don't want to have to do anything to get it. So the challenge is inviting people in and making them not feel attacked.

Q: There is an op-ed that mentioned the difference between equality vs. equity in regards to Bowdoin's digital commitment. Is it an equality play as opposed to an equity play?

A (President Rose): Do I think that the use of the language is precise, no I don't so I am open to thinking about it differently, Equity here is about creating the platforms for our least advantaged students to operate in the same way as the most advantaged. Words matter here, there is a deep equity play here in providing the opportunity for everyone to be working at the same level and the same way. It's less about "if they already have something, why are they getting it" which the op-ed was arguing. We went through a whole process of justification giving wealthy families more hardware. However, there are some students who are in the middle to whom getting hardware is still a hardship.

Q: How do African American students engage with the leadership in regards to setting strategy? How do you keep their finger on the pulse in terms of what decisions are made?

A (President Rose): The work that we are doing is often designed with students in mind but there are informal and formal feedback responses that occur as a result of being a small

campus.

A (Benji Douglas): Broad notion of building community - There is a desire present from students given the hardship of the past two years to have mental health support as well as more normal college experiences.

Q: Are there a set of rules that have to be followed and developed upon when evaluating faculty up for tenure?

A (President Rose): For tenure there are two types of criteria; teaching and scholarship. There is a whole set of data gathered to evaluate the teaching. When we hire an associate professor we hope that they will be tenured at one point. They have a body of work that they bring and they create a plan with their department, that is then reviewed by the dean. At the sixth or seventh year you come upon that tenure. We've been thinking about what constitutes good scholarship. In evaluating that research is tied to both a department evaluation and outside scholars who operate in the guild. There is a deliberate effort by the dean's office to find scholars in the department that understand the nature of that work. We are open to different types of scholarships but there is a set of rules that have to be followed and developed upon. It may be helpful to meet with Jen Scanlon to discuss faculty including some of these issues, the 9 new tenured professors are amazing.

Q: What can we do to support your work and how much more time are we going to get from you?

A (President Rose): You can help us in any way you can get involved. In the next year I would encourage the groups or committee to spend time with various leaders of the college (Jen Scanlon, Janet Lohman, Matt Ramos) to see where the work of the college is interacting with DEI and racial justice and then to ask questions to find the areas where you can or think we should be doing more. There is a deep desire to help our students of color - those are the next 12 months I would think about.

A (Joycelyn Blizzard): Important for the BCBA to listen, learn and partner.

A (Benji Douglas): Would love to talk more with you all as well.

Q: Can you elaborate on what makes current DEI roles different / more promising than those prior?

A (President Rose): It's all new territory.

Q: I hope you are looking at advising women and teachers of color who are bearing the burden of advising students of color. Students have to have faculty mentors and advisors who understand their journey - many of us experience this unevenly.

A (President Rose): We are aware of the challenge and thinking about elevating the sharing of the burden. Given the proportion of our students of color and black faculty it will require our students of color to have mentors and faculty who are white. White mentors can guide them otherwise than someone who has had the same experience, they will not get the full nature of what they need. How do we relieve the excess burden that sits our faculty of color in excess of the current role. And simultaneously thinking about a model that allows students to get what they need in a way that respects the faculty.

III. Inaugural Profiles In Courage

Michael Owens '73, BCBAA President

We honored Dr. Maurice Butler '74 and Trustee Ron Brady '89 P'19 for their incredible commitment to Bowdoin and pursuing the common good. Members of the Black alumni committee gave warm remarks celebrating Maurice and Ron for their excellence in character and in deed.

IV. BCBAA President's Report

Michael Owens '73, BCBAA President

A. Event Calendar

1. *BCBAA President Michael Owens reminded committees to have a draft of their calendar year from April to June 2023 by our April meeting*

B. Reunion Planning

1. Michael Owens invited black alumni to BCBAA's first in person meeting scheduled to occur during Reunion from June 2-5. Black alumni are encouraged to register for Reunion or attend BCBAA events only; we will have a luncheon on Saturday June 4th followed by an evening party in Russworm, appropriately themed "Wakanda Forever"

V. Committee Reports

Committees chairs shared updates on the completion of their subcommittees

VI. Action Items

Praise Hall '20, Secretary

- Our next coordinating council meeting will be **Sunday April 10th at 4:00pm ET.**
- Committees should be prepared to share their calendar of events running from April 2022 - June 2023
- We will plan to host our first in-person BCBAA meeting during **Reunion weekend (June 2-5, 2022)** and would hope to see all alumni in attendance
- **As committees begin setting up their meetings, please reach out to Praise who will create the zoom invitation for your event!**
- **Support TWELVE Angry Electric by William Electric Black (March 17th)**