

SCC-AS 2021-03-16 Public Statement from Christine Umali Kopp

I would like to highlight my concern around a phrase that was used during Spring Convocation – Black Folks. For those who are not aware, this has roots in times of slavery and segregation and was used in a very derogatory manner. Yet, it found its way into a presentation conducted by our peers which took place during Convocation.

During a public statement at the Board of Trustees meeting on 2/8, Dr. Regina Lamourelle shared how as a Black woman being exposed to this phrase brought her back to Jim Crow times in West Virginia when Black people experienced oppression, marginalization, hatred and violence. And I'll be honest, too, that as a Woman of Color hearing these words made me feel uncomfortable and caused me to cringe; they are discriminatory, period. Dr. Lamourelle's public statement was shared again with the Student Success & Equity Committee meeting on 2/22, where it was met yet again with silence.

The fact that it took until today 3/16 for the interim president to attempt to address Dr. Lamourelle's concerns is disturbing to me. We claim to be a college committed to equity and inclusion. We even have a statement to this effect. We have an office committed to equity and social justice, that professes to have the necessary skill set to guide the college on this path.

And yet perpetrators of these actions remain silent. They have not publicly taken accountability for and acknowledgement of the words they chose to use and their impact, intentional or not. There has been no authentic making of amends.

And now we will have "third party equity practitioners" coming to SCC. What are their qualifications? How were they selected? Why have Senate, the Student Success & Equity Committee, and ODEI not been consulted regarding this training and its practitioners?

SCC's branding phrase is, "What happens here matters." This includes when Black people in our community share their experiences, voices and concerns, one would hope. To act otherwise is offensive.

I will be forwarding a copy of my public statement to the Secretary/Treasurer to be included as part of the record with the meeting minutes.