



MUNCIE, IN 47306-0610

August 8, 2018

Mr. Hall and Members of the Board of Trustees:

We as a collective group of concerned Black faculty members at Ball State University, find it necessary to respond to the recently released statement from the Ball State Board of Trustees on Friday, August 3, 2018 concerning recent remarks of Mr. John Schnatter.

In our role as faculty members, we live diversity, inclusion, and equity in our everyday lives. We bring that to our scholarship, to teaching, and to our various service across the campus community and the greater Muncie community. We believe these values, also represented in the Beneficence Pledge, are at the core of what it means to be engaged in the community. Fulfilling this function, of course, is not an easy endeavor. It requires much commitment to standing strong in the face of resistance, to engage in difficult dialogues, to hold ourselves and others accountable, to act justly, and to promote reconciliation where possible. We do our work in an environment where it is not unusual for us to be forced to confront unrelenting racist behavior where otherwise we would be focusing on productivity and quality of life; and yet we find ways to thrive.

In light of our roles and our commitments to diversity, we were disappointed, certainly by Mr. Schnatter's remarks, but more so by the BSU Board of Trustees' response. The response from the Board of Trustees essentially absolved Mr. Schnatter's of the full ramifications of his remarks with the statement that, "He has never expressed racist views." However, Mr. Schnatter has exhibited a pattern of racially charged statements, which the media has covered extensively. Moreover, racism is more than just the actions of a single individual but is shown in tolerating practices that disproportionately harm people of color. This response suggests specifically to Black faculty that our presence and contributions to this university are insignificant. The Board of Trustees' comments also suggest that as long as someone can make philanthropic contributions to Ball State, racism and associated harm are of relative insignificance. Additionally, this view is physically represented on campus at the John H. Schnatter Institute for Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise as it now stands.

The Board of Trustees' statement and the physical structure of the John H. Schnatter Institute for Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise causes harm to faculty, students, and staff alike in what it now represents. Endorsing Mr. Schnatter's racism and providing a structure where that legacy lives on unproblematically, while expecting a diverse group of students, faculty, and staff to exist in that space and across campus, further diminishes the value of our lived experiences and our identities--for a price.

While the statement has been made already, we do believe there is yet an opportunity here for Ball State University and the Board of Trustees to rectify this error and move forward by taking the appropriate moral stance. The leadership at Purdue University, University of Louisville, and other institutions have provided examples of how to move forward and recommit

to maintaining the highest ethical standards in support of diversity, inclusion, and equity. They readily made decisions to sever ties with Mr. Schnatter, rejecting the troubling pattern of racially insensitive behavior that he has demonstrated, and recommitting to diversity and inclusion at their respective institutions. They examined their core values and realized that Mr. Schnatter's actions were not in alignment. They sent strong signals distancing themselves from a troubling pattern and holding themselves accountable to their core values. We believe that BSU leadership can still move in this direction – to sever ties with Mr. Schnatter and provide a strong example of the commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity.

By severing ties with Mr. Schnatter, Ball State University can demonstrate and recommit to the values espoused in the Beneficence Pledge: “to maintain high standards of scholarship and excellence, to practice academic honesty, to act in a socially responsible way, and to value the intrinsic worth of every member of the community.” Our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community at large are watching and taking note. They need to see this commitment manifested not only in words but also in practice. They need to see the strongest ethical stance possible taken against racism in its institutional form, in accountability to these values, and socially responsible practices. They need to see that people from diverse backgrounds are treated with dignity and respected for their intrinsic value. They need to see that the university does not traffic conversations that fail to grapple with the history of racism in all of its forms. We as Black faculty at Ball State need to see this as well.

We welcome further dialogue on this matter and its correlation at all levels to implicit bias that hinders full inclusion; stand ready for constructive engagement with willing parties regarding our position; and stand firm in our recommendation that Ball State University Board of Trustees take action by disassociating themselves and our university from Mr. Schnatter. We believe that moving forward and creating a better campus community hinges on this critical step.

In solidarity,

*John Anderson, Sharon Bowman, Michael Burayidi, Ruby Cain, Dixon Dixon, Olon Dotson, Donna Edmond, Sheron Fraser-Burgess, Lourenzo Giple, Kendra Lowrey, Renae Mayes Esop McNair, Winnie Mucherah, Michael Ndemanu, Shanetta Pendleton, Rona Robinson-Hill, Shiela Smith, Dorshele Stewart, Keisha Warren-Gordon, Maria Williams-Hawkins*