The W.E.B DuBois Student Society Racial Climate Study

Report of James Madison College

February 2016

James Madison College

A Residential College of Public Affairs and Public Policy at

Michigan State University
Introduction

Throughout the Fall Semester of 2015, The W.E.B Dubois Student Society of James Madison College at Michigan State University has been conducting a racial climate study with the majority of the black student population of James Madison College. The members of the W.E.B Dubois Student Society created this study because James Madison College in its current form is not conducive to the development of Black intellectuals. The goal of this study is to compile an accurate and current list of concerns, issues, and grievances that black James Madison students have with regards to Faculty, Classroom dynamic, and Programming within in the college. The findings from this study are of vital importance to The W.E.B Dubois Student Society because Michigan State University generally, and James Madison College in particular, have refused to adequately address the educational and social needs of black students. The W.E.B Dubois Student Society intends to submit the details from the racial climate study to the administration and will continue to dedicate itself to fighting to end institutionalized racism and its forms of oppression in James Madison College and Michigan State University.

Data and Methodological Approach

The target population of this study was the 7% of students within James Madison College who are Black, 3% of students within JMC are Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% of students within JMC are Hispanic, 1% of students within JMC are Native American, 3% of students within JMC are multi-racial, and 2% of students within JMC are international students (information provided by James Madison College). Table 1.1 will show the results from an event held by the W.E.B Dubois Student Society, open exclusively to the black student population of James Madison College, entitled Black Madison Lives Matter- Be Heard; 37 students were in attendance. Table 1.2 will show the results of the surveys that were distributed to students who attended the Black Madison Lives Matter- Be Heard event; 32 responses were collected at the conclusion of the event. Table 1.3 reflect the results in numerical values of a two week long, online survey conducted through Google Documents, that encouraged the participation of exclusively black students and other non-white students in James Madison College; 32 students responded to the survey. Tables 2.1-2.3 include what the W.E.B Dubois Student Society has deemed to Relevant Material. These are instances in which a large number of the students and faculty members of James Madison College became aware of or participated in, and thus had a direct effect on the Racial Climate James Madison College.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Undergraduate Major</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Social Relations and Policy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black female student admits to being afraid to speak up against racist remarks made by fellow classmate because of lack of professor assistance in defusing what could be a hostile situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1. MC 202 (Freshman Year) The female student admits to being constantly ignored and interrupted by professor. And acknowledges that she did not have a support system from the James Madison College staff. 2. Student also says she was constantly called on by professors when discussions about black and African people were the topic as if she were a spokesperson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>During class she witnessed a white student confess to the entire class that, “Everything bad in my life was caused by black people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Comparative Cultures and Politics/International Relations</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Freshman year she witnessed a white student say, “All people on financial assistance were lazy and needed to get an education.” Also says that professors did not, and continue not to address racial slurs like “mulatto, nigger, negro, and colored” in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Social Relations Politics</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Says that white male student said he felt attacked because he was a “white</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Senior
Comparative Cultures and Politics
Female
Says that in one of her classes a white student asked, “why Black people still haven’t gotten over slaver?” Also, another James Madison College white student asked her to ask MSU’s black student Alliance organization to change its name so that white students could feel more welcomed.

Junior
Politics Theory and Constitutional Democracy
Female
1. Student said that professor stated, “slavery in America was simply not that bad.” during her [REDACTED] class.
2. In her study abroad to [REDACTED], a group of James Madison College white students were singing the rap song “Niggas in Paris”. When she politely asked them to refrain from using the N-word because it was offensive, they said, “No, No, it’s okay. It’s the song lyrics.” And continued to sing the song.

Senior
Undecided
Female
Says white James Madison College student randomly asked her how much financial aid she received.

Freshman
Undecided
Female
During her MC 201 class, the topic of racial profiling and mass incarceration came up and a white James Madison College student said that, “all black people are poor, use drugs, and live in the ghetto and that is why they are incarcerated more frequently.”

Senior
Social Relations and Policy
Male
Student says, “I have actually felt more tokenized than anything because of my skin color. I’m always being invited to participate in panels on behalf of James Madison College because I am black.”

Sophomore
International Relations
Female
Student says her professor dismissed her during a heated discussion about slavery.

Source: The W.E.B DuBois Student Society Racial Climate Study Report
She was arguing against a white James Madison College student stating that slavery was “not that bad”.

Source: The W.E.B DuBois Student Society Racial Climate Study Report
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional James Madison College Course options</th>
<th>Suggested Curriculums Changes?</th>
<th>Reading / Author Suggestions?</th>
<th>Programming/Events Suggestions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Course on Black political economy should be offered by James Madison College.  
2. Course on decolonization from global non-Eurocentric perspectives. (Course should offer in depth analysis and not the simple positives and negatives)  
3. Black Social Movements Course should be offered by James Madison College  
4. Philosophy 451 on the decolonialization, the reconstruction and the black experience should be a suggested James Madison course on all Majors’ checklists' | 1. MC 111 Harlem Renaissance should not be taught by a black professor.  
2. (International Relations) Courses focused on Africa and African people should be offered on a yearly basis instead of every other year during one semester.  
3. Classes that discuss race should focus more on the positive narrative of black people and black culture.  
4. Reconstruct MC 201 and MC 202 to give better insight on what each specific James Madison College Major entails  
5. When discussing Africa and African countries professors need refrain from generalizing the people, nations, and cultures  
6. Black political philosophers should be included in discussions/readings when topics about slavers, the reconstruction era, construction, or any events In U.S. History | 1. Their Eyes were Watching God- Zora Neal Hurston  
2. Michelle Alexander (author)  
3. Assata Shakur (author)  
4. Dreaming Blackness- Melanye T. Price  
5. Eraser (In Class) – Too controversial for first year Madison students  
6. Rivoli’s book on the traveling shirrs needs to be eliminated from 202  
7. The Black Reconstruction-W.E.B DuBois  
8. The Blacker The Berry-Wallace Thurman  
10. Tony Morrison (author)  
11. No counterview being offered when reading black literature | 1. Speaker series  
2. Social Programs dealing with social issues (ex. Colorism within society and black community)  
3. Movie Nights with professor and student led discussions  
4. Book Club with Black Authors/Readings, led by Black professor |
Table 1.2 Black Madison Lives Matter Be Heard Event
October 2015

| % of What Black Student Participants would like to see more of in James Madison College? |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Black Professors                 | Social Programming focused on African American issues |
| Course Options geared toward the African American community | Black Readings/authors integrated into the core curriculum |

Source: The W.E.B DuBois Student Society Racial Climate Study Report
Table 1.3 W.E.B DuBois Student Society Racial Climate Survey Online
December 2015

What is your major in James Madison College?

- Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy: 5 (17.2%)
- Social Relations and Policy: 15 (61.7%)
- Comparative Cultures and Politics: 1 (3.4%)
- International Relations: 8 (27.8%)

What year are you?

- Freshman: 8 (25%)
- Sophomore: 5 (15.6%)
- Junior: 11 (34.4%)
- Senior: 8 (25%)

What is your Race/Ethnicity?

- Black or African American: 29 (96.7%)
- Other: 1 (3.3%)

Have you experienced racism any form in your James Madison College Course from Professors?

- No: 23 (79.3%)
- Other: 6 (20.7%)

Are you comfortable discussing race in your James Madison College classrooms?

- Yes: 21 (67.7%)
- No: 10 (32.3%)

Source: The W.E.B DuBois Student Society Racial Climate Study Report
Have you experienced racism within James Madison College outside of the classroom? (examples include but not limited to office hours, social programs, Case hall)

- No: 19 (61.3%)
- Other: 12 (38.7%)

Would you like to see more Black faculty members in James Madison College?

- Yes: 28 (90.3%)
- No: 3 (9.7%)

If you have experienced some form of racism in your James Madison College classes has it affected your academic performance in anyway? If so how?

- Discouraged you from attending office hours: 0 (0%)
- Discouraged you from attending class: 0 (0%)
- Discouraged you from participating in class discussion: 9 (42.9%)
- All of the above: 7 (33.3%)
- Other: 5 (23.8%)

If race has been a topic in your James Madison College courses, do you feel it was discussed appropriately?

- Yes: 18 (58.1%)
- No: 13 (41.9%)

Would you like to see more diverse readings offered in your James Madison College courses?

- Yes: 27 (87.1%)
- No: 4 (12.9%)

Source: The W.E.B DuBois Student Society Racial Climate Study Report
Would you like to see more Faculty members of color in James Madison College?
- Yes: 27 (87.1%)
- No: 4 (12.9%)

Do you feel your major in James Madison College adequately and appropriately addresses the topics of race or race relations?
- Yes: 13 (46.4%)
- No: 15 (53.6%)

Would you like to see more Faculty members of color in James Madison College?
- Yes: 27 (87.1%)
- No: 4 (12.9%)

Have you ever experienced any form of racism in your James Madison College Courses from fellow students?
- No: 14 (46.7%)
- Other: 16 (53.3%)

Would you like to see more diverse course options offered in James Madison College?
- Yes: 27 (87.1%)
- No: 4 (12.9%)

Source: The W.E.B DuBois Student Society Racial Climate Study Report
Hello All,

The Black members of James Madison College Student Senate instituted a boycott of the organization-James Madison College Student Senate-because of an incident of racism and discrimination on the part the leadership of Student Senate. Those students have written a statement with details on the incident below:

On Wednesday, November 11th, 2015 There was a Poll posted in the 'Senate Thanksgiving' group on Facebook-comprising of all of the JMC student Senate members-entitled "Senate Thanksgiving Dress Code" created from an Executive Committee members account that was extremely insensitive and offensive to not only black James Madison College Student Senators but all black people. One of the four options on the dress code poll suggested senators’ dress in “1780s/1880s/1980s AMERICA” attire for the Senate Thanksgiving dinner. It deeply saddened, frustrated and angered us, as this has clear racist implications. Knowing two members of the Executive Committee in James Madison College—would create such a racist and discriminatory post, is sickening, but realizing the rest of the Executive Committee and Student Senate let the post go unchecked and unacknowledged is appalling. Even after not one, but two black student senate members voiced their discomfort with 1780s/1880s AMERICA attire option on the poll there was minimal support from our fellow senators and none from the executive committee. As black JMC Student Senate members we welcomed the idea of attending Senate Thanksgiving because of its supposed history of being a fun, bonding experience for senators to get to further get to know one another and commune outside of Case Hall. However, with this egregious offense by two senators in leadership and lack of action in addressing in a swift and timely manner, by the Student senate executive committee has left us extremely uncomfortable with even the thought of attending this function. Being around a group of students, their classmates, and some even their supposed comrades, knowing that the idea of 1780s/1880s AMERICA dress code was not only an option for Senate Thanksgiving, but was voted for by a handful of members, honestly disgusts us. Also, seeing some of their fellow senators demand we explain how the post was offensive once the post was taken down and the dialogue was started in the student senate Facebook group was shocking. This is why we will not be attending tonight’s Senate Thanksgiving. We look forward to speaking at the General Assembly meeting on Wednesday, explaining to all of the senators Why the post was offensive, and how posts like that and other micro-aggressions inside and outside of the classroom are one of the many reasons why JMC student culture is so negative. Also, until we receive a serious response from the executive committee regarding the action taken against the member who posted this poll, and what steps the Executive Committee and Student Senate as a whole will be taking to make us feel safe and comfortable as members, we will not be attending any more JMC student senate events or meetings after this Wednesday.

We did not join Student Senate be shut out, discriminated against, and made to feel excluded, and with this Dress Code post and the lack of action by the Executive Committee they have successfully done that.

Signed, Black James Madison Student Senate Members
Dress Code:

- Don't look like a scruff: 13 Votes
- 1780's/1880's/1990's AMERICA: 5 Votes
- Drug Rugs only: 4 Votes
- Fedoras Mandatory: 2 Votes
- Legwarmers only: 2 Votes

Source: The W.E.B DuBois Student Society Racial Climate Study Report
Relevant Material 2.3- Comments made by James Madison College Student Senator via James Madison College Student Facebook Group (1,024 James Madison College Student members) - November 2015

• “What actions? She acknowledged you guys. Do we really need ANOTHER rally?”

• Another “JMC, the sociology department, psych, RCAH and many others have individual courses in MC. It is already in place. There is no need for a recognized department that would only waste money to establish.

• “…But MSU is the last place that treats blacks poorly…”
• “I do not stand in solidarity with Missouri or the MSU protests.”
• “Minorities have higher incarceration rates because they commit more crime! Black communities lack positive role models, and in too many cases are there black children who grow up on welfare or without a father or mother in their lives. It’s no wonder they commit more crime on average! and we are teaching our next generation to blame the white man on everything that be falls them, when the real change starts within”
Summary of Findings

The W.E.B Dubois Student Society is in concurrence with James Madison College Student Senate Resolution 22.01 passed January 2016, which states the following:

RESOLVED, that the James Madison College Student Senate calls for increased action with a measurable and effective plan from administration, the faculty affairs committee (FAC), and staff to provide better diversity training for faculty, staff, and students; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we call for the use of non-white authors and scholars in MC 201 and MC 202 to be regularized, in order to explain systemic racism and foster Madison classrooms in which the subject of race is discussed in a culturally sensitive way, to ensure an environment that is both intellectually challenging and emotionally safe; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the administration create a more diverse volunteer cohort of James Madison College Ambassadors, that includes all represented identities in James Madison College, to allow more students representative of the university the chance to participate in visit days, allowing prospective students to have the chance to see Madison students they can relate to; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we call on our James Madison College Student Senate representatives on the inclusion committee and the college curriculum committee (CCC) to work towards the above changes;

It is with these findings, that the W.E.B Dubois Student Society hopes the faculty; students and administration of James Madison College and Michigan State University become fully aware of the real issues, grievances, and struggles of Black James Madison College Students. We the members of the W.E.B Dubois Student Society are so passionate about rectifying all these issues mainly because James Madison College is one of the premier programs in the Midwest that is supposed to address and examine the major political, legal, social, and economic issues affecting our world. However, the college has not and cannot do that appropriately without all experiences and narratives present in the classroom. More importantly, it is our hope that the Dean, administration and all faculty of James Madison College take very seriously the recommendations set forth by the students who participated in each of these surveys and go about improving the racial climate in the college with the utmost urgency.