



June 24, 2020

Dear Charger Community,

To put it simply, we are pissed. After weeks of organizing, hours dedicated to meeting with administration, and ourselves, and living through two global crises, we are disgusted.

Initially, when we created this organization, it was in response to the incidents circling social media around George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade. The world was experiencing a charged history that provided us organizers with a resilience like never before. To be candid, our organization happened with a single text that ignited the long-overdue public action the University should have taken the minute it prided itself to be an institution that values diversity and inclusion. Alas, we as students of OrganizeUNewHaven have not only taken on the role of student, but administration, as we fight to close the gaps that our institution has failed to fulfill. During our time of addressing the failures of our institution, we have come to discover that our University is one that does not seek to honor its community members, but rather one of complete self-gain and promotion.

We would like to take everyone back to 2015, when the incredible advocates of our community partook in a die-in at the Midnight Breakfast in Bartels. These individuals were met with harsh words, physical blows - kicking and punching - and animal-like behavior as fellow peers spit on them. Five years ago, members of our community were advocating for the exact demands we are still fighting for right now. What does this tell you? The University has no action. The University has no true care for diversity and inclusion beyond its public requirement. The University does not value the voices that keep it in business - because we do.

Now, what we can tell you about the University of New Haven; it has perfected its sickeningly sweet use of fake words, phony smiles, and sub-par initiatives. Continuously, members of this institution - such as ourselves - work day and night to fight for the greater good of our community. However, such fighting is hard when you have no opponent. And, the University is clearly our opponent.

It is not our inclination to consider our very institution our adversary, but the University has left us with no choice. We are done fighting an opponent that does not play fair. We have asked the University to play by the rules, - of authenticity, transparency, and promise for the greater good - but they have continued to ignore us.

It is with great abhorrence we share with you the work that has consumed the time of the advocates of the Charger Community, which has been ignored by President Kaplan and his administration.

First, the organizers of OrganizeUNewHaven had the opportunity to speak with President Steven Kaplan at the peak of the Black Lives Matter protests sweeping the nation, and the exploitation of Samantha Errera's ('20) blatant racism. To no surprise, we were met with words dripping in false pride and gratitude. To our face, President Kaplan promised his words of unequivocal support to ensure the greater good of the campus community; unfortunately, we are unable to share the footage as per his request. Now, throughout our two meetings with President Kaplan, we provided him with a platform that encompassed years of [garnered experiences and demands](#) that we believe will continue the movement put forth by our alumni in 2015. He was quick to express his support as he promised this would be the beginning to creating the change that has been long overdue.

Sadly, but not surprisingly, we were fooled.

On Monday, June 22nd, 2020 at 4:41 PM, President Kaplan sent the following message, - titled Appointment of Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion/Chief Diversity Officer - "[d]ear Members of the University Community, I am pleased to announce the promotion of Lorenzo Boyd to the position of vice president for diversity and inclusion/chief diversity officer." Instantly, our trust and respect for our institution was diminished. This message was received only three days after sharing a thoughtful [letter](#) - from ourselves and recognized faculty and administration - with President Kaplan that blatantly digressed our *disapproval* of an internal hire. In response to our letter, we received the following message, "[t]hank you for sharing this thoughtful letter on behalf of the entire group. I will certainly give it serious consideration as we move forward on this critically important position." Well, call us over-bearing, but we do not believe a "serious consideration" can occur within three days.

Therefore, it is our respectable assumption that President Kaplan, and his administration, have moved forward with absolute disregard to our voices - the ones who are directly affected by this hire - that he so strongly "supports."

It is with truth, that we acknowledge that President Steven Kaplan does not respect us organizers or his faculty and administration. Considering, the original grievances of this platform outlined our demand for an external hire as we did not believe there was a single individual on our campus fit for this position. Furthermore, once in direct contact with President Kaplan, we asked to be included in the hiring process of this position, and we asked for the name of the position to be formally changed from "Chief Diversity Officer" to "VP for Institutional Integrity and Justice." To analyze the disregard for our demands and suggestions, President Kaplan has failed

us with an internal search, President Kaplan has failed to include us in the hiring process, and President Kaplan has failed to change the title of the position. Overall, President Kaplan has once again utilized his perfected routine of public appeasement to which he later unveils to reach his closeted truth where he follows his own agenda that does not include the voices of outsiders. Again, we are not astonished to have been brushed off by the administration as it is rather routine; however, we are discomforted by the embellished truth so well performed by President Kaplan and Dr. Lorenzo Boyd.

Unfortunately, we do not believe Dr. Lorenzo Boyd is equipped to take on such an invaluable position such as the “Chief Diversity Officer”. The position of the *VP for Institutional Integrity and Justice* is one that requires an individual that provides the precedent for effective allyship by unequivocally speaking out against injustices as to educate and inspire others to do the same. It is to our dismay to admit that Dr. Lorenzo Boyd is not the person to do this. In honor of transparency, we share our experience with President Kaplan and now Dr. Lorenzo Boyd.

The organizers of OrganizeUNewHaven have had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Boyd a number of times - three - over the past few weeks. Dr. Boyd, like his fellow administrator President Kaplan, was quick to commend us organizers and promise his support in working towards the greater good of our community. At the time, we were grateful for Dr. Boyd’s support of our platform and goals; especially, after partaking in a meeting with 13 faculty and staff members - of which Dr. Boyd is one of - to discuss our preference for an external hire. During this two and half hour zoom call, Dr. Boyd did not express any sort of disapproval or disagreement when it came to an external search. Thus, we are disheartened to find that Dr. Boyd has accepted such a promotion when he was fully aware of student disapproval, as well as faculty and staff disapproval, when it came to an internal hire. Nonetheless, here we are.

Therefore, we ask the genuine question, what has Dr. Lorenzo Boyd done for our community? Titles, public appeal, and detailed resumes are great, but we are not looking for a “token hire,” but rather someone of immediate action. Our words are not a target at Dr. Lorenzo Boyd, but rather a recognition of the fact that, yes, Dr. Boyd has an incredibly extensive and colorful resume of his past endeavors; however, his initiatives are not ones that have directly impacted our campus community. Thus, we continue to support, and demand, an external search for the *VP for Institutional Integrity and Justice*, and we absolutely disagree with the promotion of Dr. Lorenzo Boyd and refuse to accept, or work with, him until the decision is reversed.

We now address our greater Charger Community and ask that you review what we have laid out before you and take charge with us as we continue to fight for the greater good of our community. Again, the organizers of OrganizeUNewHaven are disgusted by our University’s steps, and we cannot support an institution that does not support or value us. It is with enraged hearts that we publicly share this message and ask for your support.

Sincerely,

The members of OrganizeUNewHaven:

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Michael Desir

Jennifer Edwards

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