

To the VCUarts Dean and VCU Craft/Material Studies Administration and Faculty:

Students at VCUarts observe a lack of overall diversity, and we believe that this creates an inability to retain or recruit minority faculty and students. This reflects an inherent bias of the Craft/Material Studies department's commitment to maintaining a status quo of a homogenous group of primarily white, cisgender, and heterosexual faculty. Because of the actions of the Craft/Material Studies department outlined in this letter, the students are expressing distrust in the ability of the Craft/Material Studies department and VCUarts administration to successfully recruit and support faculty and students that are different than the current VCUarts faculty. We find this issue to be especially pressing considering the current hiring process for a tenure-track position in Clay is in full swing.

Despite their request, students were not included on the hiring committee.

We find the current lack of equity to be evidence for our concerns. Of the graduate faculty, 9/10 are white. Of all faculty, 16/20 are white. Of the 4 faculty members who are POC, 3 faculty hold adjunct/temporary jobs. Of the current graduate students, 2/11 are POC. All of the current faculty are cisgender.

The VCU Craft/Material Studies department does not reflect the demographics of the VCU student body, which is approximately composed of 50% white students and 50% POC. Additionally the Craft/Material Studies department at VCU does not reflect Richmond's demographics. The 2010 census demonstrated that 50.6% of the population identified as Black or African American, 40.8% identified as White, 2.3% identified as Asian, 0.3% identified as Native American, 0.1% identified as Pacific Islander, 3.6% identified as some other race, and 2.3% identified as two or more races. 6.3% identified as Hispanic or Latino (of any race).

We find the Craft/Material Studies department lacks retention of minority candidates as evidence for our concern. VCUarts was unable to retain esteemed and respected faculty such as Sonya Clark, Margaret Meehan, Andrea Connel Keyes, Aaron McIntosh, and Chase Folsom; a black woman, two female faculty, and two openly queer men, respectively. We request that the VCUarts administration investigates the department to create a system of accountability.

We as students believe that the current faculty lacks the ability to support and recruit a group of faculty and students that reflect inclusion and equity. Many of us have experienced instances where current faculty fail to responsibly discuss relevant issues like race, gender, and sexuality in the classroom. We feel that voices of minority students are silenced while others are given priority.

We require that at minimum the administration responsible for these decisions add a fourth candidate with a student on the selection committee, or call the search as failed. If these requirements are not met, there will be a series of further actions on behalf of the VCU Craft/Material Studies students and affiliated students through VCUarts.

Signed,

A group of graduate and undergraduate students in Craft/Material Studies and other students from VCUarts