

Factsheet on Race and the Emory Cuts

This past September, Emory University announced sweeping cuts to many of its flagship programs. Explicitly undertaken for non-financial reasons,ⁱ this reorganization, known as “The Emory College Plan,” has multiple, deeply troubling implications for Emory as a diverse community and as an institution grappling with a history of slavery and racism.ⁱⁱ

The problematic racial dimensions of the cuts become glaringly apparent when considering *whom* the cuts target in demographic terms, the *process* by which the cuts were made, and what these cuts *represent* for the future of Emory as an institution of higher learning in the ‘New South.’

1. Whom the Cuts Target

Cut programs include the Division of Educational Studies (DES), the Journalism program, the Department of Visual Arts, the Institute for Liberal Arts (ILA), the Department of Physical Education, and some tracks in Russian, Farsi, and Hindi.

The impact of these cuts on the diversity profile of the university is undeniable. In terms of minority students, Spanish and Economics are home to among the highest numbers of international students in the University, with Economics in particular featuring a strong representation of Graduate Students from the Indian Subcontinent and Africa; both of these Graduate programs have been ‘suspended’ indefinitely. Approximately 25% of ILA students are minorities; this program has been eliminated outright. With a 40% African American student body, the DES has the highest minority population of any department in the university and has produced more black PhDs than any other program of its kind in the country.ⁱⁱⁱ

In terms of faculty representation, the racial impact of the cuts is particularly stark. By the university’s own data, minorities made up 14.8% of overall university faculty in 2009, but 45.5% of DES faculty, 40% of Russian and East Asian Languages and Cultures faculty, 47.8% of Spanish and Portuguese faculty, 25% of Physical Education faculty, and 20% of Economics faculty. These five departments are all within the top nine departments in terms of minority representation of the University’s 36 departments in the College of Arts and Sciences.^{iv} A September 28th *Emory Wheel* op-ed^v puts this data in perspective:

What is even more shocking is that, in this 2009 report, a whopping 25% of all faculty of color come from the four departments named above [DES, REALC, PE, Spanish and Portuguese]. Of these 21 faculty of color, only 5 had tenure in 2009. **Which means a solid 75% of the faculty of color in the above mentioned departments are likely to lose their jobs.** Even tenured faculty, all nationally and internationally renowned scholars, are unlikely to stay. **Which is to say that these cuts, in addition to terminating departments, are essentially terminating roughly 25% of the faculty of color.**

University representatives have been repeatedly confronted with the demographic implications of the cuts but have yet to offer any substantive response or have ignored those questions altogether. Replying to this Op-Ed in her official capacity, Associate Vice President of Communications for Emory Nancy Seideman has labeled the *university's own data* as 'misleading' but declined to offer *any* other comment as to the racial impact of the cuts.^{vi} Open letters from both the Emory chapter^{vii} and national bodies^{viii} of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) have also explicitly raised the issue of the demographic implications of the cuts – questions that the University's official responses have entirely ignored.^{ix} Likewise, a delegation of Student Revisioning Committee (SRC) representatives and faculty allies presented copies of a letter raising questions about race and the cuts to both Dean Robin Forman and Emory VP Gary Hauk (acting as President James Wagner's representative), but those questions were again evaded or ignored outright.^x

James Wagner has himself been publicly confronted with questions about race and the cuts, most notably during the question and answer session at his State of the University address this October.^{xi} Although Emory staff videotaped the entire event, the university has withheld releasing its tape of the Q&A, but an audio recording of the event has emerged online.^{xii} When pressed on the question of race by a Graduate Student in the DES, Wagner asserts that he "trusts the decision-makers took that [race] into account" and then claims that the university's diversity rankings will remain unchanged, offering as proof data that hinges on the diversity profile of the very departments the cuts will be eliminating. Wagner's appeal to diversity as simply a matter of rankings and marketplace perception rather than as a non-monetizable value in-and-of-itself is emblematic of his administration's fixation on rankings over and above substance, a trait which has previously been highlighted by the recent revelation that Emory officials had engaged in a decade of misrepresenting SAT scores to the national media and Federal Government as part of an effort to boost Emory's rank as a "destination college."^{xiii} Later in the same Q&A, Wagner explicitly compares the "courageous leadership" behind the cuts to the work done by the Civil Rights movement.

2. How These Cuts Were Made

That the cuts were undertaken in clear defiance of Emory's governance protocols and bylaws is at this point inarguable.^{xiv} What is less well known is that the committee which formulated the cuts at Dean Forman's behest, the Faculty Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC) *was and remains composed exclusively of white faculty members, a supermajority of whom were men.*^{xv} While direct accusations of racism are unproductive, the fact remains that this decision-making body, like so many of those at Emory, wielded outsize power to impact a community that it could at best be said to represent only partially. It is likewise significant that none of the CFAC members hailed from any of the departments directly impacted by the cuts. Against the backdrop of President Wagner's recent essay, which praises the Three-Fifths Compromise as a model of deliberative process, and which specifically invokes the Compromise as a defense of the Emory College Plan, the fact that the decisions

surrounding the cuts were made by a cadre of elites of a more or less monolithic complexion is deeply troubling.^{xvi} This concern grows more acute when the impact of the cuts is considered in terms of what they spell for the future of this university, and given the fact that President Wagner has explicitly stated that “there’s a more of this to come.”^{xvii}

3. What These Cuts Signify

Undertaken in the name of raising Emory to new levels of “eminence” on the national and international academic marketplace, these cuts not coincidentally represent an effort to distance Emory from its historical ties to the Atlanta community and to the South in general. In a very real way, this shift in favor of boosted national rankings over and above local community commitments represents a step backwards for Emory as a diverse space and as an institution with a difficult history of race relations.

Nowhere is this clearer than the case of the Division of Educational Studies (DES). The DES is a 100-year old program, one of the oldest in the South, with deep ties to the Civil Rights movement, and has been one of the largest - if not the largest - producer of education professionals in and for the region.^{xviii} Not coincidentally, this program has also produced more black education PhDs than any other program of its kind in the country - 46 in a decade. This program has also maintained several ongoing educational outreach programs to urban Atlanta schools, whose students have been taught by Emory graduate students as part of their MAT requirements. After letting three successive faculty vacancies go unfilled for years, Emory moved to eliminate the DES, with the only reasons publicly given being that the DES wasn't “adequately interdisciplinary” and was insufficiently “eminent” for a top-tier, 21st century university. The elimination of the DES will have a direct and deleterious impact on the region's infrastructure, its inhabitants, and their children. Cutting the DES also plainly represents a step backwards in terms of whatever positive roadmap can be made of the vision of a “New South” as somehow casting off a history of racism, poverty, and educational disenfranchisement.^{xix} For a school in urban Atlanta – a demographic island whose student body is only 9% black in a city that is 54% black – cutting this program is acutely exemplary of the apparently constitutional inability of the current school administration to reckon with embedded institutional racism and privilege bias.

For More Information on the Emory Cuts, including an archive of media coverage:

<http://stopthecutsemory.com/>

Email Contact: concerned4emory@gmail.com

ⁱ Emory enjoys a 5.4\$ billion endowment (the 16th highest in the US), received 1.69\$ billion in alumni donations in 2012 alone, and entered the fiscal year with a record surplus in its operating budget. All told, these cuts save – at maximum – 4.5\$ million in spending over five years, a figure that does not take into account the substantial outlays implementing the reorganizations will require.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.emory.edu/home/about/anniversary/essays/slavery.html> and <http://www.southernspaces.org/2010/other-side-paradise-glimpsing-slavery-universitys-utopian-landscapes>

ⁱⁱⁱ Emory Professor Vanessa Siddle Walker addresses the specific case of the DES in an interview available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LC2Vi1vvlS>. See also note xiii below.

^{iv} This data is taken from the report compiled by the Offices of Community and Diversity, Equal Opportunity Programs, and Institutional Research, which is publicly available at http://provost.emory.edu/documents/community/cd_profile_volume2.pdf, (pgs. 16-20). It is also notable from this report that the cuts will have an outsize impact on gender demographics: overall, women made up 40% of Emory's full-time faculty in 2009, but 100% of Journalism faculty, 80% of Russian and East Asian Languages and Cultures faculty, 60% of Spanish and Portuguese faculty, 55% of DES faculty, 50% of Visual Arts faculty, and 50% of Physical Education faculty. These six departments are within the top fifteen departments university-wide in terms of the representation of women (pgs. 25-29).

^v <http://www.emorywheel.com/cuts-disproportionately-hurts-faculty-of-color/>

^{vi} <http://www.emorywheel.com/cuts-disproportionately-hurts-faculty-of-color/#comment-351>

^{vii} “We ask, as well, that these committees give due consideration to the impact of the cuts and discontinuations on minority faculty and women; to their implications with regards to policies and practices put into effect over the past decade concerning the hiring, retention and promotion of lecture track faculty; to whether they presage a greater reliance on adjunct labor in teaching at Emory; and to the impact of the relocation of tenured faculty in affected departments on the work of those faculty, along with any other questions or concerns deemed to be within the purview of faculty responsibility for curricular matters.” <http://www.emorywheel.com/an-open-letter-from-the-aaup/>

^{viii} <http://emoryaaup.net/2012/12/08/national-aaup-endorses-call-for-suspending-cuts-pending-review/>

^{ix} http://news.emory.edu/stories/2012/12/er_national_AAUP_letter/campus.html

^x <http://stopthecutsemary.com/2012/11/05/letter-delivered/>, Wagner's tepid response, which avoids addressing the data entirely, is available at <http://www.emorywheel.com/lets-all-look-forward-a-response-to-student-concerns/>

^{xi} <http://www.emorywheel.com/wagner-pressured-at-univ-address/>

^{xii} <http://gonepublic.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/wagner-10-30-12.mp3> The question about race arises at 8:10, the Civil Rights analogy comes up in response to a question posed at 38:00.

^{xiii} <http://www.ajc.com/news/news/local/will-data-deception-damage-emory/nRMLP/>

xiv <http://gonepublic.net/2013/01/19/reviewing-the-facts-on-emorys-cuts/> and <http://stopthecutsemory.com/2012/11/16/lgs-executive-council-letter/>

xv <http://www.emorywheel.com/committee-helped-forman-evaluate-departments/>

xvi It is perhaps also worth noting that the Emory Board of Trustees is 90% white, 75% male. http://www.emory.edu/secretary/board_of_trustees/current-board/index.html

xvii <http://stopthecutsemory.com/2012/12/12/notes-from-negotiations-with-wagner-forman-and-hauk/>

xviii <http://des.emory.edu/home/about/history.html>

xix The DES Mission Statement makes clear the specific and vital ways in which racial awareness factors into its work: “There must be profound changes in the ways teachers are prepared if new realities are to be accommodated. As the number of non-White school children increases, the number of non-White educators is predicted to decrease. This decline has been most acutely felt, and likely will continue to be felt, in the South where Black teachers were disproportionately dismissed after desegregation, and, ironically, where the majority of Black children live. The South is also the region with the highest expectation for population growth and consequently where the prospects for future teacher employment are the most promising. These employment openings will be in growing urban districts with low-income Hispanic American, African American, and immigrant students and where inexperienced and often uncertified teachers seek employment. Students in predominantly Black and Hispanic, high-poverty, immigrant, and urban schools are twice as likely as students in other schools to be taught by the most inexperienced teachers. Research confirms that students whose teachers either have a major or a minor in the subjects they teach outperform their colleagues by 40% of a grade level in critical areas such as mathematics and science. African American students are twice as likely as White students to be assigned to the least effective teachers, and students who are subjected to several unqualified and ineffective teachers in a row fall further and further behind their classmates. Despite these data, the reality is that the most effective teachers are not found in the districts in which they are needed the most.” <http://des.emory.edu/home/about/mission.html>