

A Supplement to the Strategic Plan for Colby

Presented to the Trustees of Colby College, April 12, 2002

Introduction

As part of a day of peaceful protest against institutional racism and heterosexism at Colby, we, a group of students of color, in coalition with a group of queer students, have come together with our allies to present our concerns and demands to the Trustees of Colby College.

We have prepared this document in order to provide the Trustees with historical and anecdotal evidence of the discrimination which students of color and queer students face on a daily basis. While Colby has made some gains in embracing its diversity goals, we as a community still have a long way to go. Our documentation demonstrates that the college's committees, task forces and programming boards have not been successful in eliminating the daily experience of hostile "micro-aggressions" for students of color and queer students, and it is largely these experiences which make life at Colby so challenging for us. *Note: By "micro-aggressions" we mean the casual and hard to prove acts of discrimination that are felt by the recipient, but may not be significant enough to be recognized as hurtful by the perpetrator. These instances may be small, but they are frequent and cumulative. An example would be a Colby staff member referring to her role in a commercial transaction as having involved "Jewing him down to a reasonable price," or a white student referring to his old clothing as being so "ghetto." The term "micro-aggressions" first came into widespread use in 1970, with the work of psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce. For further readings on this topic, please refer to Pierce, Chester M., "Psychiatric Problems of the Black Minority," in *American Handbook of Psychiatry*, v. 2, "Childhood and Adolescent Psychiatry" or Davis, Peggy, "Popular Legal Culture: Law as Micro-Aggression," found in *Yale Law Journal*, v. 98, pp. 1559-1577. Many examples of micro-aggressions are given in Appendix A].*

While students of color and queer students have different experiences of discrimination, the hostile climate experienced by both groups at a campus that purports to embrace diversity has brought us together in coalition with our allies. We also recognize and affirm that "students of color" and "queer students" are not separate or distinct categories, and that there have always been intersecting memberships and interests between those groups. We have spoken at length with one another, and returned to the demands of past student groups and task forces to provide detailed and specific demands that will work in conjunction with the "Strategic Plan for Colby." We strongly believe that the entire Colby community will benefit from the implementation of our demands.

In short, we agree with the goals of the strategic plan for enhancing diversity, and particularly with the following focal points:

- Development of more rigorous forms of administrative accountability regarding the fulfillment of the College's diversity goals;

- Substantial revision and promulgation of new recruiting practices and requirements in all of the College's personnel searches;
- More careful and regular mechanisms of assessment and reporting, including annual reports in the key areas of student, faculty and staff retention and hiring, and campus environment and atmosphere;
- More thorough and systematic training for student leaders, faculty, and staff in the challenges and requirements of living in a more diverse environment.

(From "A Strategic Plan for Colby," Draft Revision dated March 29, 2002, p. 6)

Our primary concerns are embodied in the first bullet point. We do not want to see any additional task forces or college committees being formed to assess the status quo. The findings and demands have changed very little since 1970. What we want, need and demand is "administrative accountability regarding the fulfillment of the College's diversity goals." We want, need and demand a commitment from the Trustees and a timeline for implementation of our specific demands and the elements of the Strategic Plan.

Historical Context

In 1970, seventeen Colby students of color occupied Lorimer Chapel. These students presented a list of demands highlighting the need for the institution to address the racial climate on campus.

In 1984, fraternities were abolished in the interests of improving the campus climate for all Colby students.

In 1992, the Lesbian and Gay Subcommittee of the Campus Community Committee officially requested assessment and evaluation of issues and campus climate for queer students at Colby. At that time, the college agreed to implement certain initiatives. In particular, an outside consultant was to be hired in conjunction with representatives across the campus community to objectively assess the campus climate for queer students, and to make recommendations to the administration in the areas of admissions, athletics, the health center, the Dean of Students office, and Orientation. This initiative has yet to be implemented. (Please see Appendix A, "Incidents of Micro-Aggression" for examples on why this work needs to be done.)

In 1994, the Colby Students of Color United for Change made an official request for multicultural housing and, once again, asked the institution to examine the "micro-aggressions of daily life" at Colby. The request for multicultural housing was denied.

Also in 1994, the Lesbian and Gay Subcommittee of the Campus Community Committee reviewed the original recommendations from 1992, as well as President Cotter's response. The Subcommittee exhorted Colby to carry out the recommendations of the 1992 document.

In 1995, construction began on the Pugh Center.

In 1997, a group of concerned faculty wrote a letter to members of the Bridge, President Cotter, and Dean of Faculty Robert McArthur, in an attempt to institutionalize Colby's curricular offerings on sexuality and lesbian and gay issues. The letter spoke directly to the curricular demands outlined in 1992, and encouraged the Colby community to engage in a broader dialogue about queer issues.

In 1999, frustrated by the institution's reticence toward the spirit of the aforementioned concerns and requests, Colby students of color and their allies presented President Cotter with a list of fourteen demands for improving the racial climate at Colby. These demands arose out of the work done by the Task Force on Institutional Racism, formed by President Cotter.

Deeming the official response unsatisfactory, a large group of Colby students of color and their allies orchestrated a day-long occupation of President Cotter's office. They aimed to facilitate a more critical and meaningful discussion with the Cotter administration regarding the hostile climate on campus for students of color.

With President Adams' arrival in the 2000-2001 academic year, three new campus committees were formed, in response to the demands of 1999 (and earlier) and following a great deal of controversy and debate. These three committees are the Multicultural Affairs Committee, the Committee on Race and Racism, and the Coalition for Equality.

WHY WE'RE HERE TODAY

Today, students of color, queer students and our allies are still waiting for meaningful and substantial institutional change to address over three decades of grievances regarding the campus climate and institutional response. Therefore, once again we seek to reiterate these ongoing concerns in the following list of demands. We believe that Colby has the potential to incorporate our demands within the framework that President Adams has outlined in the Strategic Plan. **We are not asking for anything that is not *already* in the Strategic Plan for Colby. We are here to provide you with an opportunity to engage in "rigorous forms of administrative accountability regarding the fulfillment of the College's diversity goals."**

Our two primary demands are, in order of priority:

- Multicultural Housing
- Strengthen Colby's curricular and academic commitment to multiculturalism and diversity

(As stated in "A Strategic Plan for Colby," Draft Revision dated March 29, 2002, p. 10).

Each of these demands has been explained in detail below. Our secondary demands are listed on p. 11 of this document. We strongly believe that the demands we have outlined go hand in hand with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan for Colby.

I. Multicultural housing

Premise:

We believe that the Strategic Plan represents Colby's institutional commitment to improve the intellectual and social climate for all students at Colby. We agree with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan, and specifically with the following focal points:

- Enhance the intellectual climate and atmosphere on the campus;
- Integrate more effectively student academic, residential, and social experiences;
- Provide a richer variety of social and cultural programs for all students, and develop a more sophisticated institutional understanding of the nature and limitations of student social life and activities;
- Support an increasingly diverse community by assisting all students in appreciating the value and challenges of a diverse community, and by improving the campus climate for ALANA students, international students and other under-represented groups;
- De-emphasize the role of alcohol as an organizing force in social life through the provision of meaningful social alternatives, more accurate information on the normative use of alcohol among students at Colby, and health and wellness education;
- Heighten awareness of personal safety issues, including sexual assault and violence in relationships.

(From "A Strategic Plan for Colby," Draft Revision dated March 29, 2002, p. 13)

We believe that a Multicultural House would both "enhance the intellectual climate and atmosphere on the campus" as well as "integrate more effectively student academic, residential, and social experiences." In many ways, Colby holds students of color, queer students and international students responsible for educating the rest of campus about our "issues." Students who agree to be active in this process are rewarded with hostility, hate mail, and angry editorials in the Colby *Echo* for their efforts. We are not asking for social, political or intellectual conformity, only for a safe space where we can return to support one another in our social, cultural and intellectual growth [**Note:** When we speak of "safety" we wish to address a wide range of threats, ranging from actual physical harm, to the hate speech that we saw on campus in 1994 and again last semester, to the micro-aggressions described in Appendix A. While Colby may appear to be a "safe" campus in terms of violent crime, it does not feel safe to the students who are consistently marginalized, criticized, humiliated, and questioned about their "right" to be here by students, staff and faculty]. Students of color and queer students have no choice but to "develop a more sophisticated institutional understanding of the nature and limitations of student social life and activities," as we are frequently marginalized, excluded and attacked by the dominant culture's social life and activities.

Colby has stated its commitment to improve "the campus climate for ALANA students, international students and other underrepresented groups," and the stories of Colby students provided in Appendix A indicate that we have far to go in this regard. A multicultural house would provide a place for students to sustain themselves and continue to be productive community

members. As of today, at least 12 Colby students have applied for leaves of absence with the Dean of Students' office, citing the hostile campus climate as a reason why the leaves are necessary.

A Multicultural House would be another chemical-free living space on the Colby campus whose social programming would not only de-emphasize alcohol, but work to carry out many of the initiatives described in the Strategic Plan for Colby. As the diversity among those present today demonstrates, there are a variety of students at Colby who would actively seek out the experience of living in multicultural housing. Students of color, majority students, Maine students, international students, queer students, straight students - there is a critical mass of us who are demanding a Multicultural House because we desire the safe space, the improved intellectual atmosphere, and the broader social opportunities that it would provide. All Colby students would be welcome to participate in the activities of the Multicultural House, in the same way that students from different dormitories and Commons already attend events in residence halls other than their own.

Sadly, the Multicultural House is desperately needed as a safe haven for students who do not choose to engage in alcohol-centered social life. Following the recent "Dog Head" party (an annual off-campus party whose main theme is the consumption of alcohol, beginning at 7:00 a.m.) the Dana dining hall was completely trashed by a small but effective number of inebriated students. Similarly, one student eating dinner in the Roberts dining hall was so inebriated that she vomited on her tray. Her friends were also so inebriated that they simply laughed and kept on eating.

At least two students sent e-mail messages to the "Digest of General Announcements" denouncing this behavior and apologizing to the dining hall staff. (See Appendix B.) They received many supportive e-mails in return, applauding their courage in speaking to a campus-wide problem that few students tolerate. These e-mails demonstrate that 1) most students do not want to engage in this type of drunken and violent conduct and 2) they are afraid to speak up about it. These students also received critical e-mails (some from fictitious accounts) which focused on the race and intelligence of the writers (the two students whose e-mails are attached here in Appendix B are well-known students of color), and their need to deal with the "real world."

We know that the majority of Colby students support diversity initiatives and are responsible, intelligent, and community-minded adults. However, the fact that students are afraid to be critical of vandalism in their own dining halls speaks to the "safety" issues we have discussed above. We know that there is a vocal, active and hostile minority who resent Colby's efforts to embrace diversity, and these individuals usually remain hidden from view, leaving anonymous markings on posters, dry-erase boards, and educational flyers, or obtaining fictitious e-mail accounts; these hidden few are much more dangerous.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the need for a safe residential space for students of color, queer students and their allies. Additional campus office space (the Pugh Center) and additional programming funds are insufficient for improving the quality of life for marginalized students. There is nothing worse than being scared to live in your own room/home.

Background:

When the request for multicultural housing was denied in 1994, Colby responded by building the Pugh Center as an area of "common ground" intended to improve the campus racial climate. However, as indicated by the 1999 occupation of President Cotter's office, the Pugh Center clearly did not fulfill the needs and demands outlined by students of color, dating back to 1970. In fact, the formation of the Pugh Center Planning Group this year would suggest that Colby acknowledges the failures of the Pugh Center in adequately addressing campus life issues. The formation of the Pugh Center Board and an increased programming budget are necessary but insufficient steps toward improving the campus cultural climate. Once again, the Pugh Center Board puts students of color, queer students and their allies in the position of educating the rest of the campus, without having a safe residential space of their own in which to support one another. While we are grateful that some of these student positions will be paid a salary, we would still argue that this is not the same as a safe residential space.

Several of our NESCAC sister schools (including Bowdoin, Middlebury and Connecticut College) have successfully established multicultural housing on their campuses. Multicultural housing has helped these campuses with both 1) the recruitment of students of color and 2) retention of students of color. We demand that the Trustees compare Colby's rates of ALANA enrollment and retention with those of other NESCAC schools with multicultural housing, as we believe that the findings will support our claims for the benefits of multicultural housing.

In 1994, a majority of members of the Trustee Commission on Multicultural and Special Interest Housing were in favor of developing a Multicultural House. At that time, the lack of consensus among commission members was viewed as being potentially divisive among members of the Colby community. Arguments against multicultural housing incorporated, among other issues, a fear that a Multicultural House would seem "separatist" or "cliquish," and that this would be a counter-productive strategy for integrating the entire campus, following the abolition of fraternities in 1984. We do not believe that these arguments still hold for the following reasons:

1. The Commons system has not succeeded in reorganizing social life in ways that are satisfactory to the *vast majority* of Colby students. This fact is alluded to in the Strategic Plan, in the initiative that seeks to "Re-evaluate the Commons system for its effectiveness in governance and find ways to improve the social atmosphere within the Commons." (From "A Strategic Plan for Colby," Draft Revision dated March 29, 2002, p. 13) Most current Colby students cannot name the Commons in which they live, and the Commons system is not visible as a means of social organization.
2. In 1994, fraternities had only been gone for 10 years, and it is possible that the memory of that controversy was still fresh in everyone's minds. However, it has now been almost 20 years since the abolition of fraternities, and there are very few individuals who have an institutional memory of that period in Colby history. We have not seen any concerted effort to bring back fraternities, nor any indications from the Trustees that they are willing to do so. However, we *have* witnessed consistent demands for a Multicultural House from Colby students, as well as a majority of members of the Trustee Commission

on Multicultural and Special Interest Housing voting in favor of such a house. The specter of fraternities is no longer relevant.

3. The vast majority of Colby students are looking for an improved means of organizing social life on campus. They are also willing to actively engage in processes of integrating social and intellectual life. They want to actively embrace diversity and multiculturalism, and are willing to do so in a vocal manner. Some of the most powerful evidence of this fact could be seen at last week's Drag Show, sponsored by the students in Margaret McFadden's seminar on alternative popular cultures. Queer students, students of color, athletes, head residents, and students from all areas of the campus along with faculty members, President Adams, Cathy Bruce and Dean of Students Janice Kassman all participated in a wildly popular event that was both educational and entertaining. This campus is ready to take our approach to diversity and multiculturalism to the next level.

Summary:

We believe that a Multicultural House provides a rational, sensible, and low-cost means of implementing many of the goals, objectives and initiatives described in the Strategic Plan for Colby. The Multicultural House would serve as a residential center for improving the intellectual and social climate on campus, while also providing a chemical free safe space for students of color, queer students, and any other students who want to embrace diversity and multiculturalism.

We demand that the Trustees make a commitment to a Multicultural House on campus, and that we be provided with a timeline for implementation. Conversely, if the Trustees will not support a Multicultural House, we demand a response in writing which describes the rationale behind that refusal. The concerns and criticisms of the Trustee Commission on Multicultural and Special Interest Housing are no longer relevant, and even then a majority of members supported a Multicultural House. We believe we have clearly demonstrated the ways in which a Multicultural House is a perfect fit with the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

II. Strengthen Colby's curricular and academic commitment to multiculturalism and diversity

Premise:

We are in complete agreement with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan as they relate to curricular integration. As seen in the demands dating back to 1970, students of color and queer students have actively advocated for the further integration of issues of race, gender, sexuality and social class inequality into academic programs, particularly in disciplines where this type of research is ongoing and significant.

Since at least 1970, students of color have demanded additional courses and faculty to address issues of race, ethnicity and inequality. Since at least 1992, queer students have demanded queer studies courses and faculty. We believe that these demands indicate a strong and compelling "current and prospective student interest" (see bullet point below) in these courses, which has

been historically present since at least 1970. Last year, over 800 Colby students signed petitions in support of Queer Studies. This year, the Student Government Association passed a resolution supporting the development of Queer Studies. Colby students are committed to and support the development of a curriculum that embraces multiculturalism and diversity.

Referring to the focal points in the Strategic Plan referenced on page 2 of this document, we strongly believe that integrating the curriculum will contribute to "more thorough and systematic training for student leaders, faculty, and staff in the challenges and requirements of living in a more diverse environment." When we embrace diversity in our curriculum, we will be making substantial gains towards educating ourselves and one another. We agree that Colby must engage in "substantial revision and promulgation of new recruiting practices and requirements in all of the College's personnel searches," particularly when defining and implementing searches for new faculty. We also agree that "more careful and regular mechanisms of assessment and reporting, including annual reports in the key areas of student, faculty and staff retention and hiring, and campus environment and atmosphere" are necessary for those same searches.

In our experience, the major obstacles to developing these courses and hiring new faculty have been a lack of institutional commitment, resistance by certain academic departments and programs, and the faculty hiring freeze. The Strategic Plan addresses these issues, as follows:

- Selectively reinforce existing academic departments and programs where compelling programmatic opportunities or current and prospective student interest offer justification for additional faculty positions made possible by this strategic plan. Commit a portion of the ten new faculty positions to this purpose, utilizing departmental planning documents and the customary annual process of Dean and Division Chair review and recommendation as the mechanism for making allocation decisions;

(From "A Strategic Plan for Colby," Draft Revision dated March 29, 2002, pp. 11-12)

- The Dean of Faculty will make available a fund to support book purchases and related expenses for the development of new courses that meet the revised diversity requirement;

(From "A Strategic Plan for Colby," Draft Revision dated March 29, 2002, p. 20)

We support the goals and objectives regarding curricular enhancement listed here, as well as other focal points listed on pages 18 and 20 of the Strategic Plan that focus on enhancing diversity in the academic program.

Background:

We agree with the assessment that curricular integration will not only improve the academic profile of Colby, but also improve the campus climate for students of color, queer students and other marginalized groups. However, students of color, queer students and their allies have met with a great deal of resistance from the faculty in their attempts to carry out these goals.

Government, Psychology and Economics are large and highly visible departments that are frequently described by students as lacking courses that address issues of race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class and inequality. Student demand for such courses has frequently been met with a negative (and in the case of Government and Psychology, openly hostile) response. Issues of race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, and inequality are not at the periphery of these disciplines, but form a substantial core. Consequently, Colby needs these changes in its curriculum not just to meet student needs but to bring these disciplines at Colby out of the dark ages and into more currency. As these disciplines stand at Colby, they are out of mainstream conversations and are antiquated and fossilized.

Students of color frequently describe their academic experiences in certain majors in terms of survival, rather than an active intellectual engagement. We believe that the reluctance of these departments to embrace the scholarship in their own disciplines which addresses issues of race, gender, sexuality and social class inequality puts Colby students at a competitive disadvantage with students from other institutions who have access to a more fully integrated curriculum.

We believe that the proposed Center for Public and International Affairs would be an obvious home for research focusing on inequality. Given the fact that the departments of Anthropology and Sociology are likely to be housed there, as well as Women's Studies, African American Studies and the Oak Institute, this would be a logical site for a program that explores issues of race, gender, sexuality and social class inequality. This would also provide an opportunity for the Government and Economics departments to broaden their curricular offerings and bring themselves into currency with their NESAC counterparts.

Summary:

We support the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan for Colby that focus on improving the academic profile through curriculum integration, new faculty hires, and the development of the Center for Public and International Affairs.

We demand that the Trustees approve a Queer Studies program, and provide a financial commitment for its development.

We demand that the Trustees commit at least three of the ten new faculty positions to academic programs that will contribute to the further integration of the curriculum to meet the demands for additional courses covering issues of race/ethnicity and Queer Studies. Ideally, one position would be focused on race/ethnicity, one on Queer Studies, and one on some combination thereof.

We demand that the Center for Public and International Affairs incorporate a program for the study of inequality that addresses issues of race, gender, sexuality and social class.

We support the ideals of the Strategic Plan in this regard, and believe that institutionalizing these issues as part of the academic program will be fundamental to allowing Colby to achieve its

diversity goals. Again, all we ask is that you act upon the Strategic Plan that you have helped to create. The "most rigorous forms of administrative accountability regarding the fulfillment of the College's diversity goals" will in the end, come from you. We are here to open a dialogue on the ways that we **KNOW** will be successful for **ALL** Colby students.

AND FURTHERMORE...

We believe that Colby is in a position to greatly improve the quality of the intellectual, cultural and social experiences for all students through the initiatives described in the Strategic Plan. We offer this list of demands as a reminder that many of the goals and objectives of the Plan have been researched at length for over thirty years, and the needs of students have changed very little in that time. A **Multicultural House** and **Curriculum Integration** are our top priorities for improving Colby in substantial and meaningful ways.

We would also like to list the following demands, which are important to us as secondary priorities that Colby can easily address. **We want to be perfectly clear that fulfilling these secondary demands will in NO WAY substitute for fulfilling our primary demands.**

- Fulfillment of the initiatives toward improving queer life on campus promised by President Cotter in 1994.
- Increased enrollment of Native American students, with special consideration for members of Maine tribal nations.
- Examination of the relationship between the dining hall and residential staff and the rest of campus, paying particular interest to the class dynamics that dictate their working conditions and treatment.
- A feature article in Colby Magazine on this demonstration and the experiences of students of color and queer students, written in consultation with these students.
- Repair the Black Entertainment Television channel on campus.

We respectfully request written responses to each of these demands by May 1, 2002. We will not be ignored. We will be present at every gathering of the Trustees, including graduation for the class of 2002, until our demands have been met with an appropriate response.

Respectfully submitted,

THE COALITION FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

c/o Javanese M. Hailey, Juliet M. Land, Elizabeth M. Parks, and Mindy F. Pinto

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Appendix A: Incidents of Micro-Aggression

General Comments

Every Black student on campus has been called by the wrong name — always the name of another Black student. Not all Black students look alike.

A student working on campus loves his/her job, but has been belittled and patronized by a co-worker. This student has noticed that the coworker does not speak in the same demeaning manner to other students. The coworker has yelled at him/her in front of other students, even when s/he was working overtime. The coworker also wrote a note to the student, misspelling his/her name, even though the student had worked in the office for 1 1/2 years. The student is going to quit the job at the end of the year.

Many lesbian students have been examined in health services, making clear that they are both 1) lesbian and 2) sexually active. They are always given pregnancy tests.

Many white students assume that all students of color receive financial aid.

Athletics

Women athletes constantly have to deal with homophobia and heterosexism. Students endure hostile looks from other teams, coaches and referees. They endure constant snickering and derogatory comments like "dyke," "carpet-licker," and "bull dyke," frequently preceded by the f-word. They endure hostile looks from coaches of other teams at Colby.

Coaches set a homophobic example for their students by making comments like "Oh, that's so gay..."

One women's athletic team has a quote board, in which players, captains, seniors, coaching staff, managers and athletic trainers participate. About 3/4 of the quotes are heterosexist, and there has been a great deal of resistance to putting up quotes which would educate people about queer issues.

Coaches of women's teams talk to all of their athletes about their social lives by referring to their "boyfriends" and the "men" in their lives, even when they know they have lesbian members of the team. One female coach who is in a relationship with a woman does this as well.

Women athletes who bring women friends to team parties are ignored or treated with hostility. Coaches then sanction those athletes for leaving or not attending those functions. Lesbian students who feel uncomfortable with drinking or the pressure to be straight are told to "get over it and be a *real* part of the team."

Many women athletes are terrified of coming out because of the hostile treatment they face from teammates and coaching staff. Others simply quit the sports they love.

Academics

When students of color have academic difficulties in courses and speak to certain professors (the same names come up year after year), they are frequently treated with hostility. When these students suggest that they should drop the courses or majors in which they are struggling, these professors usually say "I think that's best" and do very little to encourage struggling students to "stick with it." The implication that students read is that the professors do not believe that students of color "have what it takes" to succeed in those majors.

One professor kept calling the three Black students in his/her class by the wrong name. The professor finally admitted that s/he could not tell the students apart. Aside from the fact that these students look nothing alike, it is a common practice for Colby faculty members to download their students' photographs on student rosters from the registrar's website. The professor still could not get the names right.

One of the students in this class was a first-year student, and the professor was his/her advisor. When the student approached a Dean about the problems with the professor, the student was told to "talk it over with your advisor."

A Women's Studies professor directed all questions about Black women's literature to the women of color in the class. If they did not know the answer, she would speak to them in an incredibly condescending manner.

In this same class, the professor asked students to make a presentation on the lesbian feminist canon. She looked directly at a lesbian student and handed her the assignment while other students in the class had their hands up, and the targeted student did not.

One student of color majoring in Government attended a function sponsored by the department for its majors. When the student arrived, a well-known and powerful professor asked the student, "are you lost?"

During a Psychology department discussion of racism, a professor was asked by a student if any of the three open faculty positions would consider hiring someone who would teach any non-traditional (for Colby) courses, even something like industrial psychology. The response was no, this had not been considered and would never be considered. The implication was that courses on the psychology of race/racism were somehow academically or intellectually inferior.

One professor in the Government department (with an endowed chair) was discussing student requests for more courses that cover race, ethnicity and inequality. His response as he rolled his eyes was, "We gave them the Pugh Center, what else do they want?"

Students in a Spanish language class performed skits about Colby. A white student dressed in baggy jeans, a football jersey and a baseball cap that he wore backwards. He was supposed to be a person of color, and he complained about diversity. Everyone in the class laughed, and after a student of color walked out, the professor never asked why.

A student of color took a course on gender, and was the only student of color in the class. Whenever issues of race were discussed, the student was targeted and expected to speak for every person of color on campus and explain her/himself.

Some professors who are quick to criticize Colby's treatment of diversity also contribute to the problem. One professor consistently targets a woman student whenever racism/diversity issues are discussed. The professor has stated things like "I always think of you" when opportunities arise to speak about experiences at Colby. This student is frustrated by being used as the "official spokesperson for the Black population at Colby." While the professor may believe that this "targeting" is a compliment, it is actually exploitation. It is the professor's responsibility to teach, not the student's.

A student who ended up on Academic Probation worked extremely hard the following semester and managed to make the dean's list. At no time did the student receive a letter from a dean indicating that s/he was no longer on probation. The student had to contact the dean and request this. No dean ever called this student to follow-up with how s/he was doing.

Many students of color, including those having academic difficulties, have a relationship with only one dean, the Dean of Intercultural Affairs. One student was never approached by any other dean until s/he began the process of transferring to another school. That was the first time that someone other than "the Black Dean" took an interest in the academic difficulties of this student. The "Black Dean" is always sent to deal with students of color.

Residential Life

A conversation overheard in a dormitory bathroom went like this:

"Ugh. My hair is being bi-sexual today."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh it's not curly and it's not straight."

A student of color put quotes by a notable Black scholar on the dry-erase board on her dorm room door. While she was gone on break, someone anonymously wrote "bullshit" on the dry erase board. There have been at least 10 incidents of people changing or erasing what she has written on her dry erase board, making her feel targeted, humiliated, and unsafe.

A woman student "came out" to her friends and acquaintances. Another student who lived down the hall called her "lesbo" in an incredibly derogatory fashion, and in front of a large number of people. When the first student confronted the second student, saying she just wanted to be treated like a human being, the second student told her "I just don't like lesbians." The first student was afraid to walk past the second student's room on the way to the bathroom, and the two students are currently in a class together.

A queer student moved off campus after his/her roommates continually ridiculed the student's involvement in rallies against hate crimes, ally meetings, and dorm events dealing with homophobia. The roommates indicated that they didn't "want anyone to think we're gay." This speaks quite clearly to the homophobia of many Colby students, in that they will not support queer issues, and they perceive "being gay" as something bad and dangerous.

A student of color was approached in the dining hall by a woman who was visiting Colby with twenty-five prospective African American students. The woman told this student that a white student had approached her in the bathroom, stating "Colby is really diversifying." The student of color was dumbfounded and embarrassed.

Many students of color face hostility from their white roommates during their first year at Colby. Many students have described experiences of roommates hinting that "they don't belong at Colby" or "they got in because they're ALANA" or "my parents are paying for your tuition." Many of the racist comments are subtle, covert, and indirect, but the students of color receive the message loud and clear; they do not have as much right to be here as white students.

Queer students are treated with hostility, suspicion and fear for doing something as basic as using their dormitory bathroom.

A group of Asian students were walking in a dining hall, and were distracted when a group of white students started yelling "ching-chong-ah-so! I speakee Chinee!" When the white students noticed that the Asian students were staring at them, they bent over their trays and giggled together.

When a student came out to her first-year roommate, the roommate stopped talking to her, stopped giving her phone messages, and pretended like she wasn't there. The situation was hostile and unbearable. When the student requested a new living situation, a dean told her to wait until the next semester. For two agonizing months, this student kept her books in the Pugh Center, and slept either in the Pugh Center (at least 3 times a week) or friends' rooms.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough what a toll life at Colby takes on all of us. Upperclass queer students and students of color serve as counselors and advisors to underclass students. Many students deal with depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts/attempts. While upperclass students understand the pain that underclass students are feeling, the stress of serving as a therapist also takes its toll. As a result, the majority of students of color and queer students are only too happy to leave Colby, and are unlikely to return or become involved in the school as alumni.