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# [Letter to the Community, May 7, 1997]

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# SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE

May 7, 1997

To: The College Community

On Wednesday evening, May 7, Student Senate held its annual dinner at the President's house. As is customary, the Senate set the agenda and formed the guest list. The guests were the President, Dean of the College, the Dean of Studies, faculty members of the following standing committees: Advisory, Curriculum and General; the Dean of Admissions and the Director of Financial Aid. The topic of discussion was racial and socio-economic diversity at Sarah Lawrence.

The meeting began with questions provided by the Student Senate. In the initial discussion we talked about the meaning of diversity and its omission from the draft of the Strategic plan, and faculty hiring. About half an hour into the meeting a large group of additional students entered the living room and read the attached statement (A).

Following the reading, the students demanded that the President, Dean Kaplan and Dean Katz sign the statement immediately. The discussion then focused on the document and the demand for immediate signing. Alice, Barbara, and Marilyn expressed their full commitment to race and class diversity at the college, and agreed to the formation of a committee to place diversity issues prominently within the strategic plan. However, they declined to sign under pressure and on demand, and without consultation with faculty. Alice offered, then and there, to write her own statement of commitment, but this was not acceptable to students. Members of the faculty suggested several other resolutions. But on learning that Alice, Barbara and Marilyn felt unable to sign the student document, the students -- including all the senators -- left the meeting.

We, signed below, remained behind to address the students' demand. Because what the students want is so close to what the administration and the faculty are committed to, we have shaped their document to make a statement we could all sign, which follows

**Members of the faculty and administration recognize that fundamental to the future of the college is a commitment to race and class diversity. This commitment is absent in any significant way from the Strategic Plan which is meant to articulate the college's vision for the future. We recognize that true moral vision can only be accomplished by addressing these issues of diversity and that a commitment to racial and class diversity must take an active form. Members of the Administration and**

of General, Curriculum and Advisory committees are committed to developing plans to implement diversity in each of their areas of responsibility

To this end we commit ourselves to establishing a student/faculty committee, through nominations and elections, to research and develop strategies for expanding race and class diversity in the faculty, staff, student body, and curriculum of Sarah Lawrence College. These strategies will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan. This committee, which will itself embody the real diversity for which it is to work, will begin its task immediately.

We call on the entire community to help development and implement our commitment to diversity.

From: Alice Ilchman, Barbara Kaplan, Marilyn Katz; General Committee: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]; Curriculum Committee: [REDACTED]; Advisory Committee: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]; Division Chairs: [REDACTED]; Dean of Admissions: [REDACTED]; Director of Financial Aid: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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# The Student Demand

(A)

We demand that the administration formally recognize that fundamental to the future of the college is a commitment to race and class diversity. We feel that this recognition is absent in any significant way from the Strategic Plan which is meant to articulate the college's structural and ideological vision for the future. We feel that this vision is inherently worthless if it fails to address these issues of diversity. A commitment to structural race and class diversity must take an active form; without action any commitment is rhetorical.

To this end, we demand that a student/faculty committee be established through nominations and elections to research and compose an official strategic plan for race and class diversity in faculty, student body, curriculum, and the ideology of Sarah Lawrence College. This committee would begin work in the fall of 1997 and its proposal would be treated in the same fashion, and adopted in the same capacity, as the current strategic plan. It is imperative that this committee embody the real diversity for which it will work.