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LNGST 245
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1b. Dear Provost Sortor,

I would like to begin by commending the College on its initiative to make changes to educate students to be more inclusive, forward-thinking, inclusive, and well-rounded in this proposed plan for the "OLE Core" Curriculum. Several of these requirements are vital for the future of the college, showing a true dedication to the College's goal of being the best place of learning that it can be.

One requirement that stuck out to me, as it would to many students on this campus, particularly students of color, is the Power and Race requirement. This is a requirement that would explore the dynamic between race and ethnicity and institutions of power in this country. I would like to discuss three things in particular in regards to advocating for its importance: its applicability to the greater world, its relevance to this campus, and the current absence of critical discourse surrounding this topic.

This is an issue that expands far beyond the classroom. We live in a global society, where people of all races and backgrounds live and cooperate together. This means that educating Oles about the pervasive issues of race that continue to plague our society today is an important step in setting them on the path towards becoming global, educated, welcoming citizens. It is a common misconception that we are living in a post-racial society. However, as Alim and Smitherman emphasize in their 2012 book *Articulate While Black*, the United States is plagued by "Racism 2.0," a form of racism in which assumptions are drawn based on race, without people acknowledging that they are doing this. This leads to Enlightened Exceptionalism, the concept that White people perceive high-achieving people of Color as exceptions to the rule rather than capable and hardworking people who represent their race. Teaching concepts like these allows Oles to be more conscious and considerate in their interactions, and possibly in positions of the power in future careers.

It is a very evident reality that the St. Olaf Campus is dominantly White. This makes it even more important to give voices and platforms to people of Color, and more specifically, students of Color on our campus. By doing so, particularly in academic settings, we let them know that they are heard, they are valued, and that people are being educated on issues that involve them. Though greater society has microaggressions that oppress them, St. Olaf can take steps in the right direction by including these sorts of conversations. Because people of Color are a minority on campus, it is even more important to create space for students to be educated about race issues.

At St. Olaf, there are courses, like Linguistics 245, that cover these sorts of topics. However, it is not a requirement, meaning that many students currently graduate without solid awareness about how to combat modern issues of racism. Linguistics 245 is a wonderful example of the type of enriching course that would benefit the discussion and critical discourse about race at St. Olaf. Because language is such a vital and integral part of discrimination

today, it is only natural that the linguistics department should be expanded to include this course permanently, and perhaps other courses. As someone who is hoping to build an individual major in linguistics myself, I truly feel that expanding this department could help students fulfill both the new GE requirements and learn more about the ways in which language impacts our society, a conversation that is largely absent on campus currently.

Including this new GE requirement, Power and Race, can only help our campus grow in being an accepting, enriching, and collaborative environment that recognizes and tackles difficult issues that apply to us. I believe that this addition would be extremely beneficial and that the administration at St. Olaf should go through with this proposal. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Helen White

2c. How can St. Olaf implement conclusions from AWB into their mission of equity and inclusion? See the College Mission here. Write a few paragraphs. You may revise OR add to the College Mission if you like.

The St. Olaf College Mission contains six meaningful parts: “to excel in the liberal arts,” “to examine faith and values,” “to explore meaningful vocation,” “to be an inclusive community,” “to be a globally engaged community,” and “to be nourished by the Lutheran tradition.” These core portions make up what St. Olaf stands for. In regards to the message of Alim and Smitherman’s *Articulate While Black*, the section on “to be an inclusive community” aligns most nearly with the message of this book. However, the mission statement could be yet more specific. That is why I propose adding a seventh section: “to empower minority culture and language through a holistic education.”

The current section on inclusivity within the community is, in its essence, a blanket statement rather than a critical look at the ways in which the college can assist minorities, racial or otherwise. Because education is such a make-or-break space for minorities, it is vital that the college is specific and assertive in its mission statement on this matter. The addition of a new section I propose as follows:

To empower minority culture and language through a holistic education: The College recognizes modern issues of racism and other forms of marginalization, including language-based discrimination, unspoken bias, microaggressions, and institutional discrimination and vows to work to eliminate and/or minimize their presence on campus. We work to listen to students in minority groups in order to better serve and aid them at St. Olaf and beyond. Because institutions of education can be settings where minority voices are silenced and otherwise oppressed, the Colleges particularly strives to ensure that our classrooms and community are open and accepting to all.

Having this recognition of the issues that face minorities aligns with the message in *Articulate While Black*. Because Racism 2.0 can run rampant if it is not identified and

challenged, having this public statement from the College denouncing this specifically is a powerful statement. Adding this element is a promise to students that this sort of discrimination will not be tolerated and that students' voices are being heard.

Educational settings can be places where dialects are erased, where nonstandard and racialized varieties are denounced, and where people who identify with these races are treated with less value based on their background. However, they can also be places where people learn about these injustices and learn how to combat them. Simply acknowledging these issues is a big step on the path towards building a more equal society. This is the message of *Articulate While Black*, and it can certainly be applied in a productive and active way at St. Olaf College.