April 22, 1974

TO: The Black Student Union, University of Idaho

Response is herewith made to the April 17, 1974, communique of the Black Student Union of the University of Idaho. While the introductory remarks of that document high-light a range of problems which its list of eleven demands would speak to, there are inaccuracies as well as items not amenable to unilateral solutions introduced which make direct response difficult. For example:

The statement is made that only one of every 15 black freshmen will graduate. Our records show that in academic 1972-73, of 37 black students enrolled, five graduated, fifteen left the institution, either to go elsewhere or because of academic failure, and 17 returned for this academic year. While we obviously have to work on reducing the failure and drop-out rate among black students, the problems appear to be of very different dimensions than suggested in the communique.

Reference is also made to the Director of Intercultural Programs, both by inference, in the introduction, and in demand number 5. While the Black Student Union demands immediate hiring of a person from a minority group to fill the position of Intercultural Program Director, other student groups, including at least one minority group, served by the office have made strong representations of support for the present Director and do not want a change.

Here unilateral dealing will obviously produce no general, satisfactory solution.

Before dealing directly with the demand list we would draw attention of the Black Student Union to the attached document developed by the University's Juntura Committee. It is a proposal to deal with coordination of minority group concerns and it is on the Faculty Council's agenda for its Tuesday meeting. We feel that many of the items touched upon in the Black Student Union communique can find resolution in a comprehensive plan such as this and we strongly urge that Black Student Union members be present at the Faculty Council meeting, or make suggestions relative to this plan should they have them, to members of the Council.

Should a plan such as this meet with the approval of the Faculty and the various minority groups represented on campus, we would endeavor to make sufficient budgetary realignments since we have absolutely no funds for new positions currently, to permit the hiring of the suggested director. We are committed to the idea that this director must be from a minority group. We would also propose that the ethnic student advisory board initiated by the student advisory services office last year be reactivated and used as a sounding board for the development and improvement of services to minority students.

Coming now to the list of demands, we have already indicated that we do not believe a unilateral action in response to number 5 is a proper approach. The director suggested in the Juntura plan noted above, could we believe, be the solution here.

Residence halls changes, already approved, have cleared the way so that student athletes on grants, as of next fall, will have the same free choice of housing afforded other students. Number 10 of the communique is thus answered.

The administration in good faith offered a written response to the Black Student Union communique on April 19, 1974, and at the request of the Black Student Union is presenting it today instead. We feel that number 11 is also disposed of.

The remaining eight demands fall into four categories. Those dealing with hiring, particularly of minority group members, those dealing with the organization of a Black cultural institute and a Black studies program, those dealing with dormitory living, and those dealing with financial aids and needs of minority students, particularly in reference to federal aid programs. At the present time, University hiring practices are closely monitored by the Affirmative Action Officer, to insure that minority applicants are sought and carefully evaluated. For example: recent hirings in the athletic department have included extensive canvassing to solicit applications from Black and other minority professionals. We had only one application from a Black candidate and there was not a vacancy on the coaching staff in the speciality he represented. Frequently the stumbling block to the hiring of a minority applicant has been the relatively non-competitive salary scale which is a consequence of continuing low budgets at the University. Such salary

deficiencies are accentuated by the fact that other colleges and universities are also aggressively seeking Black and other minority candidates. In many instances they are simply priced out of our market. Obviously we must continue to give attention to these matters and we shall. Should an outside review of our present hiring practices be desired, we would suggest that the Idaho Commission on Human Rights or other similar group might be involved.

Concerning university funding for a Black Cultural Institute and a comprehensive Black Studies Program, the facts are these: 1970 census figures indicated that in the total Idaho population of 713,000 people, there were approximately 2,130 Blacks, 6,687 Native Americans and approximately 17,000 Chicanos. Thus Black citizens comprise somewhat less than three tenths of one per cent of the State's population. Presently, of approximately 7,100 students enrolled in the University of Idaho, 36 are Black. Small as this number may be, the total of Black students in our student body is roughly twice their representation in the State's population which supports this institution. The University is located far from large, diversified Black populations from which it can attract students and on which it can depend for support for any on-going Black Cultural Institutes or programs. In other words, while we must and will continue to enroll and assist Black students, primary obligation to the people of Idaho, the taxpayers who largely support this institution, suggest that the University must also address itself increasingly to a vast number of proliferating state needs. This presents

acute budgetary problems since the monies needed to hire additional qualified minority personnel to assist in conducting extensive programs for even one minority group let alone several are simply not available at present. The University is faced with demographic and financial limitations which make it impossible at present to implement comprehensive across the board programs for black students. We will continue to offer courses in Afro-American history, Political Science, Sociology and Literature, and, as funds become available we will continue to seek qualified Black instruction for them.

In matters of racist discrimination in dormitories we would welcome a bill of particulars. The communique does not make clear what remedy is sought for the alleged discriminations, nor in fact does it detail them.

Finally, in terms of federal financial aids programs, according to our figures minority students comprise about 7 per cent of all those students receiving aid and they receive about 14 per cent of the total aid dollars. Three percent of all students receiving aid are black, while black students comprise less than one percent of the total student body. In view of the eudcational disadvantage of minorities, the awarding of proportionately larger amounts of federal assistance to minority students is obviously justified. It should be pointed out, however, that such monies are not allocated to minority group students by quota. Rather, aid is based upon a nationally accepted needs analysis which must be applied to all students seeking financial assistance, minority or otherwise. The suggestion by the

Black Student Union that there be a review of federal aid allocations and minority student needs is quite acceptable to the University. We would welcome it. We believe that such a review will clear up a number of misunderstandings in these areas. The suggestion that the review panel be the State Attorney General, the University President, and a Mr. Ed Reed, who is unknown to us, is not necessarily rejected but it is our feeling again that the Idaho Commission on Human Rights might better supervise such a review, fairly and expediously while honoring necessary safeguards for the confidentially of student records.

We hope that these responses clarify some of the issues raised in the Black Student Union communique and the constraints under which we at the University must operate. We will remain open to discussion of these problems and hope the Black Student Union will also remain open to discussion following its study of this reply.

Ernest W. Hartung