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BOWIE STATE BAND MEDIA BRIEFING PRESS KIT

Friday, November 30, 2018



A Gateway to Opportunity

Bowie State University is building a dynamic future on a proud heritage. Rigorous academic programs and real-world learning opportunities with business and industry partners set the foundation for students' success. In this supportive and inclusive environment, students find their individual strengths and take pride in the accomplishments that prepare them to compete in a highly technical, rapidly changing global society.



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Bowie State University

Founded in 1865, Bowie State University is the oldest historically black university in Maryland and one of the oldest in the nation. More than 150 years later, we continue to be a leader in providing affordable, high-quality educational opportunities to a diverse population of students.

Distinctive Recognition

- A top 30 historically black university (*U.S. News & World Report*)
- #1 for value among Maryland's four-year colleges and universities (*The Economist*)
- A top 100 producer of minority degrees (*Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*)
- One of Maryland's best four-year colleges or universities (*Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education* U.S. College Ranking and BestColleges.com)

First-Class Learning Opportunities

- Bowie State's cybersecurity programs are recognized by the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security as models of excellence.
- The College of Education leveraged grants from the U.S. Department of Education to develop and implement two new programs that train special educators to work with children from diverse backgrounds with disabilities and special needs.
- The Fine and Performing Arts Center regularly welcomes the public to world-class shows and concerts in performance spaces that rival professional theaters.

Enrollment (Fall 2018)

- 6,320 Total
- 82% African American
- 5,308 Undergraduate students
- 21 Countries of origin
- 1,012 Graduate students

Bowie State University Band



The Bowie State University Band Program is comprised of the Symphony of Soul Marching and Pep Bands, as well as the Concert and Jazz Bands. Each ensemble functions as part of a primary musical unit that represents the university in local and national performances. Two auxiliary units — the Dancing DIVAS and the Color Guard — are also part of the Symphony of Soul. In total, 88 students participate in the University Band. This includes 56 musicians, 17 dancers and 15 color guard members.



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Bowie State Band - Press Release

November 30, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bowie State Band Resumes Activity on One-Year Probation Following Suspension *Program to Enhance Band Program Includes Anti-Hazing Re-education*

(BOWIE, Md.) – Bowie State University President Aminta H. Breaux announced a one-year probation for the Symphony of Soul (SOS) and a change in the band's leadership, along with a new program to enhance the band's academic program, following a month-long suspension of band activities as part of a hazing investigation.

The announcement restarts the band activities on a limited basis. Since November 2, 2018, all band activity, with the exception of the academic instruction, had been suspended, pending the results of an internal investigation. Findings of the investigation concluded that the band members violated the university's policy on hazing and the Student Code of Conduct. The university's policy establishes prohibitions against "any action taken or situation created intentionally to produce physical or mental discomfort, harassment or ridicule."

"It became evident during the investigation that there is an immediate need for a comprehensive re-education program to enhance the annual anti-hazing training already provided to the band and other student organizations," said President Breaux in a statement. "As an institution, we have an obligation to assure that the health and well-being of our students are not put at risk, so we must act quickly to remedy this situation."

The university introduced a Revitalization and Realignment Program to address the concerns, which includes a change in band leadership. Here are the plan's five major components:

1. Leadership Transition

Band director Dr. Adolph Wright has been placed on administrative leave, and assistant band director Billy Bennett has been appointed as the acting director. He will remain in place until an interim director can be appointed during the spring semester. The interim director will serve until a permanent director for the band is appointed, after a national search.

2. One-year Probation of the Band

During the probationary period, the band will only perform on campus at institutional ceremonies and other campus performances that fulfill the academic requirements of the program. Overnight trips by the band will be prohibited. Summer Band Camp will be suspended until 2020, and new students will not be allowed to join the band until fall 2020.

3. Required Academic Enrichment

During this probationary period, band members will be required to participate in an inclusive and comprehensive program for academic enrichment, including structured study halls.

4. Student Leadership Development & Training

Band members must participate in university workshops on understanding group formation and dynamics of group engagement, enhancing the annual anti-hazing training the band and other student organizations already receive.

5. Academic Realignment & Rebranding of Band Program

The plan will better align the band operations and academic requirements with the Department of Fine and Performing Arts. As part of this effort, the music faculty will guide the rebranding for the SOS Band, with input from students.

The Symphony of Soul Band is a vital part of the Bowie State experience, representing the university in formal ceremonies, intercollegiate athletics games, and community performances. In addition, the band provides about 88 student members with valuable musical performance experience, especially for those who study music at the university. Renewing a strong band program serves to enhance the overall campus engagement.

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About Bowie State University

Bowie State University (BSU) is an important higher education access portal for qualified persons from diverse academic and socioeconomic backgrounds, seeking a high-quality and affordable public comprehensive university. The university places special emphasis on the science, technology, cybersecurity, criminal justice, teacher education, business, and nursing disciplines within the context of a liberal arts education. For more information about BSU, visit www.bowiestate.edu.

Bowie State Band - Media Briefing President's Statement

Introduction

- Good afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for coming today. I want to welcome you to Bowie State University ... home of the Bulldogs. You know, we have a vibrant campus community here ... home to 6,320 students and many student organizations. You should also know that we stand on our core values here: Excellence, inclusivity, integrity, accountability and innovation, which support our vision and shape our culture.
- Today, we are here to announce the results of an investigation into complaints of hazing involving the Symphony of Soul band.
- The university's policy on hazing establishes prohibitions against "any action taken or situation created intentionally to produce physical or mental discomfort, harassment or ridicule."
- Investigators collected and reviewed evidence based on the interviews conducted with members of the band and band leadership, along with other relevant documents, video evidence, and written communication.
- In our Summary of Findings Report you will find further details outlining the methods of research and specific findings of our investigations that substantiated violations of the university's policy on hazing and the Student Code of Conduct.

Announcement of Probation and Leadership Change

- As a result of that investigation, we are announcing a one-year probation for the band, allowing for participation in limited performance activities during the probation period.
 - We are also making a change in the band's leadership and initiating a new program to enhance the band's academic program.
 - The university is also enhancing hazing training and educational programs for all students.
 - This follows a month-long suspension of band activities during the investigation.
 - While the incidents of hazing among Bowie State band members were serious, I want to emphasize that they do not rise to the level of harm and tragic outcomes of other recent, high-profile acts of hazing that have been reported by the media.
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- If the band's inappropriate practices had continued unchecked, they may have resulted in very different outcomes.
- That is why as a university we are **fortunate** to have learned about these incidents of hazing, so the university could design, and put into place, a plan to correct the behavior.
- We are now moving forward to put a new program in place to create a positive learning environment for our band students.
- Staff in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs worked together to develop a holistic program that will not only improve students' understanding of hazing behaviors but also strengthen their overall academic and personal development.

Revitalization & Realignment Plan

- Our students have bright futures ahead of them. What we do not want is for a student to be pressured by peers to engage in behavior that violates the rights or well-being of others. That is *not* what we define as Bulldog pride.
- There may be challenges as the band members and student at-large adjust to accepting the parameters of the comprehensive revitalization and realignment plan, but we are confident that the benefits will become evident to all over the coming year.
- We are constantly working to ensure that this learning community provides students with an environment that allows them to reach their full potential.
- Our goal is to support a successful experience at Bowie State University.
- Safety and the well-being of our students is my priority, above anything else.

Closing Remarks

- As I conclude, I'd like to highlight the lasting legacy of Bowie State University as the first Historically Black Institution in the State of Maryland.
 - For more than 150 years we have provided opportunities for students to have access to quality higher education where academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities prepare them for a successful life.
 - Thank you all again for coming. The Provost will follow with her remarks.
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Bowie State Band - Summary of Report Findings

Summary

Between the dates of October 13 and November 1, 2018, Bowie State University (BSU) received two (2) separate reports that community members were accosted following encounters with the University Symphony of Sound (“SOS”) Marching Band. The evidence supports a finding that hazing, as defined by the BSU policy, is a prevalent part of the activity that students have engaged in during their membership with the SOS Marching Band. Evidence uncovered to date indicates that band administrators were aware, at least in part, of the information leading to the current findings.

The investigators were assigned to collect and review evidence and provide findings in three (3) different categories:

- Hazing as Misconduct of Registered Student Groups – INVESTIGATION COMPLETED
- Student Conduct violations (hazing and non-hazing assault and battery) – INVESTIGATION COMPLETED with the exception of allegations of paddling
- Administrator knowledge of ongoing activity – INVESTIGATION COMPLETED

Method of Investigation:

- Investigators met with students and administrators to conduct interviews. Investigators collected and reviewed evidence based on the interviews conducted, reviewed the SOS Band Constitution, and reviewed all other relevant documents, video evidence, written communication, and other materials.
- Preliminary interviews were conducted of 22 students and Dr. Adolph E. Wright, Director of University Bands between November 2 and November 6, 2018. Those interviews utilized a single investigator model.
- The interviews conducted upon establishment of the credibility of the underlying claim between November 7, 2018 and November 27, 2018 were conducted using the dual investigator model in which two individuals sat in to take notes of each individual interviewed. Individuals interviewed beginning November 8, 2018 signed an Acknowledgement of Policy Review and Confidentiality.

Summary of Findings

- The evidence supports a finding that there have been incidents of hazing that constitute violations of the BSU Policy on Hazing and the BSU Student Code of Conduct.
 - The Policy on Hazing states that the university considers hazing as, “...[A]ny action taken, or situation created intentionally to produce physical or mental discomfort, embarrassment, harassment or ridicule.”
 - The evidence uncovered to date indicates that administration of the band is aware, at least in part, of the information leading to the current findings.
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- The “Symphony of Soul” band has an unauthorized Constitution that prescribes physical discipline for conduct infractions, requires students new to the band to do certain acts of service for other band members, and further delineates differences in conduct and consequences for those new members. This violates the BSU Student Code of Conduct definition of hazing, which forbids any action taken or situation created intentionally to produce physical discomfort, and requiring any personal servitude, as examples of prohibited conduct. The university reserves the right to take action against a student group for conduct prohibited by the Student Code of Conduct. Such acts of misconduct by students engaged in organized activities of student groups ...whether committed on or off campus, are subject to disciplinary action.
 - The university has determined that it is the best interest of the current members of the band and the overall program to place the band on probation for one year. During this period, any performances will be limited and subject to strict conditions and monitoring.
 - The university will move forward to revitalize the band program with new administrative leadership and enhanced education and training.
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Bowie State Band - Revitalization & Realignment Plan

A report of hazing allegations amongst the Bowie State University Marching Band faculty, staff and student- band members, led to an internal investigation that began on November 1, 2018. The findings of the investigation indicated that there were violations of our hazing policy and the Student Code of Conduct.

To address the issues discovered in the investigation, the administration of Bowie State University has outlined a comprehensive revitalization and realignment plan that will strengthen students' understanding of the impact of behaviors as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and initiate a student success enrichment plan to support their academic success.

The revitalization and realignment plan for the Bands includes:

- Leadership Transition
- One-year probation of the band & moratorium on admission of new students to the band
- Required academic enrichment support
- Leadership Development & training
- Band academic program realignment & rebranding

Leadership Transition

- An acting director has been named and will remain in place until an interim director can be appointed during the spring semester.
- The interim director will serve until a permanent director for the band is appointed.
- A national search for a permanent band director who is an accomplished music scholar with demonstrated experience working at the collegiate band level will begin on February 1, 2019. The expected start date for the new band director is August 1, 2019.

Probation & Moratorium

- The probationary period for the band is one year commencing on November 30, 2018.
- During the probationary period, the band may only perform on campus during ceremonial events, such as, Commencement, Convocation and Founder's Day and performances that are linked to curricular requirements.
- While on probation, overnight trips by the band will be prohibited.
- Summer Band Camp will be suspended until 2020.
- New students will not be allowed to join the bands until Fall 2020.

This process will address, among other things, travel protocol, operational manual with guiding principles, group formation and dynamics; and hazing education and prevention. To ensure compliance during the probation, periodic meetings will be held with the Provost, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Fine and Performing Arts Chair, the Compliance Officer and Student Conduct Coordinator.

Academic Enrichment

During this probationary period, we are committed to ensuring students' academic success. We have designed an inclusive, and comprehensive required program for academic enrichment.

Academic Excellence and Study Skill Development

- 4 to 8 hours of study hall per week, depending on the student's GPA
- Time Management – Goal Setting, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of individual success

Service Learning and Leadership

The band members will engage in service at local high schools (preferably music students) to mentor young students and serve as a change agent. Band will also engage in service to the University community as a leader and trainer

Leadership & Training Development

Members will be required to complete the StrengthsFinder assessment, a widely used tool that identifies an individual's strengths with an understanding of how these strengths align with other individuals.

Students will also be required to participate in anti-hazing training (online and in-person) and become trainers to share the anti-hazing message throughout the campus community. The leadership and training development component of the revitalization and restructuring plan will include a focus on cultural change management through formal training and support. Training topics will include Character Development, Values, Ethics and Diversity, Conflict Mediation, Behavior Modification and Change Intervention.

Program Realignment and Rebranding

A significant aspect of the revitalization and realignment plan is to better align the band with the Department of Fine and Performing Arts.

Realignment

The band will be realigned within the Department of Fine and Performing Arts (DFPA) as part of the academic unit, representing the instrumental music aspects of the B.A. Fine Arts / Music. The Band Director will be assigned to the DFPA, and report to the Chair, DFPA.

Academic concerns, recruitment and retention will be factored into the development of a B.A. Music program proposal.

Responsibilities for directing the different units of the band will be divided between the Director and Assistant Director. The band's administrative leadership and members will be retrained.

Rebranding

The Music faculty will guide the rebranding for the S.O.S. band. Student participation in the rebranding will encourage ownership of the process and outcomes.

Bowie State Band - Media Briefing “Question and Answers”

Q1. What did the band members do?

A. Some band members have engaged in acts that violate the University’s Student Code of Conduct and the University’ Policy on Hazing.

Q2. How many band members are in the Symphony of Soul band?

A. In total, 88 students participate in the University Band. This includes 56 musicians, 17 dancers and 15 color guard members.

Q3. How were these complaints received and who were those complaints forwarded to?

A. The University received complaints from students and those complaints were forwarded to Anne Valentine-Wilson, Coordinator of Student Conduct, for initial action.

Q4. How is hazing defined in the University’s Student Code of Conduct?

A. The BSU Student Code of Conduct defines “Hazing” as “any activity or action which subtly, flagrantly or deliberately demeans, embarrasses, threatens, invites ridicule or draws inappropriate or negative attention to a member, and/or an attitude which implies one member is superior to another or that initiation must be earned through personal services or meaningless activities for initiated members ...”

Q5. What specific violations or alleged hazing was investigated?

A. Allegations included incidents involving paddling, which are still under investigation; intentional physical discomfort; punishment for certain conduct; harassment and ridicule, among other allegations.

Q6. What are the consequences for the band, band leadership and individual band members that were investigated?

A. The band will be placed on a one-year probation, during which limitations will be placed on their activities and performances. Changes in band leadership are underway. Individual band members will be held accountable pursuant to the Student Code of Conduct.

Q7. What are the parameters of the Band’s probation?

A. We are putting in place a comprehensive plan for revitalizing the band program during the one-year probationary period to set new standards and ensure the safety and academic success of our students.

Q8. Do actions uncovered in the report amount to assault? How does the university define assault?

A. Assault includes verbal or written acts which place a person in personal fear or which have the effect of harassing or intimidating a person. Battery includes unauthorized touching of another person.

Q9. Where is the band leader Dr. Adolph Wright? Is he still employed by the university? A.

A. Dr. Wright has voluntarily resigned. Assistant Band Director Billy Bennett is the Symphony of Soul band's Acting Band Director.

Q10. How was the investigation conducted?

A. The investigators were assigned to collect and review evidence and provide findings in three different categories:

- Hazing as Misconduct of Registered Student Groups
- Student Conduct violations (hazing and non-hazing assault and battery)
- Personnel Infractions (evidence of administrator knowledge of ongoing activity)

Q11. How were interviews for the investigation conducted?

A. Preliminary interviews were conducted with 22 students and Dr. Adolph E. Wright, Director of University Bands, between November 2 and November 6, 2018. Those interviews utilized a single investigator model.

Upon establishment of the credibility of the underlying claim, interviews conducted between November 7, 2018 and November 27, 2018, utilized the dual investigator model in which two individuals sat in to take notes of each individual interviewed.

Q12. Who were the investigators?

A.

- Dr. Artie Travis, Vice President for Student Affairs
 - Dr. Shirelle Briscoe, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs
 - Anne Valentine-Wilson, Coordinator of Student Conduct
 - Steve B. Stephens, Coordinator of Greek Life
 - Thomasina Boardley, Coordinator of Student Life
 - Robert Enderle, Esq., Labor and Employment Relations Manager
 - Adonna Bannister Green, Esq., MBA, Director of Equity Compliance
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