

Email from Faculty President-elect Danielle DeSawal, to all faculty

April 29, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

The events of the last few days have been frustrating, disturbing, and not representative of who we are as an IU community.

I wanted to write to you today to follow up on the communication that was sent to the campus community yesterday evening. The intent of the meeting referenced was to take a first step in identifying a path forward and establishing open lines of communication between faculty, students, and administration. The lack of clarity and communication have resulted in feelings that our faculty and students have been put in harm's way, over these last few days. I do want to acknowledge that we all shared the space in good faith and acknowledged our commitment to finding a path forward in our discussions.

As was shared last week, the BFC was not involved in the creation of the ad hoc committee, nor did it participate in the creation of the addendum to BL-ACA-I18. The events over the last few days have clearly demonstrated that the addendum has not been followed and any intended goals have not been achieved. The signs in Dunn Meadow were not clear on how to gain permission for temporary or permanent structures, the approval process (when known) was not able to be completed in an efficient manner, and the individuals who have been arrested in Dunn Meadow have primarily been affiliated with IU. The escalation of the involvement of the Indiana State Police and their use of force was not done with any consultation from the BFC, the student leaders on campus, nor in my direct communications with the two ad hoc committee members who were present at the meeting.

Entering the meeting yesterday, two short-term goals were to have the addendum revoked and gain assurance that the Indiana State Police would not engage with our community. As you can gather from the message, that was not achieved. While we were able to have productive conversations, I am disappointed in the early release of the message to provide an update, as it was sent without review of anyone who was in the meeting. That has resulted in additional confusion and more mistrust in our ability to move forward collectively with the administration. It saddens me deeply to have to share that viewpoint.

I want to apologize to our student leaders who entered that space in good faith to find a solution to keep our community safe. They have been working tirelessly to ensure students are aware of their rights, came to the meeting with ideas of ways to improve communication, and have been on the receiving end of accusations that are not within their control.

I want to recognize our faculty colleagues who have been engaged in sharing their voices, advocating for free expression, and have recognized the gravity of the situation we find ourselves in at this moment. Your voices are heard.

I want to acknowledge that our colleagues have been given an impossible task to accomplish and struggled to remove barriers that would improve the situation. Many of these colleagues are administrators who are not protected by academic freedom; however, they are who we, especially our students, depend on to ensure that the IU community is well cared for, especially at this moment. They are leaders of the Office of Student Life, cultural centers, and student services offices. These individuals are in Dunn Meadow each day, talking with students, giving space for people to express their frustrations to them, and desperately trying to ensure that we continue to have free expression of ideas on this campus. Additionally, I want to recognize that many of our faculty and academic administrators have been persistently expressing concerns and have also been in Dunn Meadow regularly.

Continuing to engage in dialogue is critical, which is why I have taken responsibility for spearheading the BFC's continuing efforts to engage with faculty, students, staff, and the administration to try to identify a path forward, even when doing so is extremely difficult. I will continually walk into every meeting very conscious of the obligation I have as President-Elect of the Council to represent the voices of faculty, especially when those voices are demanding change.

Sincerely,
Dr. Danielle M. DeSawal
President-elect, Bloomington Faculty Council