

To the 5C Community and beyond,

We, the queer students of color and their accomplices at the five Claremont Colleges, would like to state our piece with regards to the firing of Dr. Jonathan Higgins as director of the Queer Resource Center; we would also like to inform our fellow students and community members for whom the situation may be new and state our goals for the future.

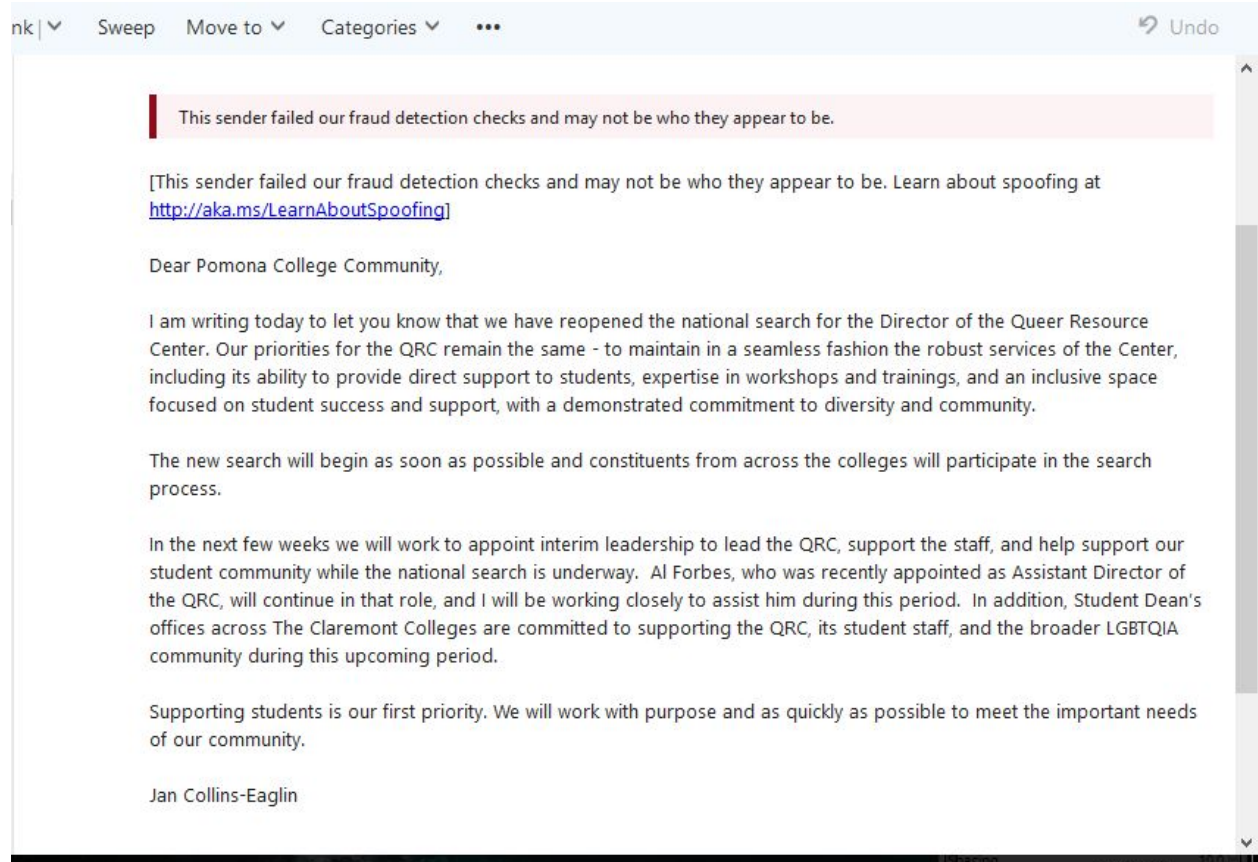
If you would like to add your signature in support, please fill out the Google form here! <https://goo.gl/forms/eXeezgyRJuaQ6WaE3> Please allow a few hours for your name to be added.

What We Know

Jonathan Higgins was hired as incoming director of the Queer Resource Center in June, a position that serves the 5C community. On July 7th, a story was picked up by the College Fix and the Claremont Independent, two conservative outlets with famously poor journalistic standards, that Higgins had tweeted on his personal account of being wary of white gays and well-meaning white women, as well as stating his belief and experience that police uphold white supremacy. (Additional information available here:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/07/11/after-news-reports-tweets-queer-advocate-fired-claremont-colleges>).

The next day, Pomona College students received an email from Dean Jan Collins-Eaglin, reprinted below, stating that the college was looking for a new director for the Queer Resource Center.



On July 13th, Pomona College students received an email, printed below, stating that the decision to fire Dr. Higgins was made by Dean Jan and Dean Feldblum and did not involve QRC staff, and announcing an upcoming appointment of an interim director as well as a search for a new full-time director. Additionally, there has been a response in the form of an open letter from various student affairs professionals calling for the resignation of Dean Feldblum among other demands. (Letter is available here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeYitannJ-PtjR25dOpx23GjwzZ6xlaafY93mjlCqN1aZVCvA/viewform>)

Dear Students,

As many of you know, the Queer Resource Center (QRC) leadership is in transition. Several questions have come to our attention with regard to the leadership transition, Dr. Jonathan Higgins' engagement in social media, and the reopening of the search.

The College was aware of Dr. Higgins' tweets and social media presence prior to our offer to hire him in early June. We recognized that he brings an important voice to the support of LGBTQIA students, and especially QTPOC students, and that he approaches his work with passion and concern.

Both prior to and after his hire, Dean Jan (and later Dean Jan and I) also engaged in thoughtful discussions with Jonathan about social media and the broader responsibilities of the Director position to create an inclusive environment that honors the intersectionality and multiplicity of all student identities.

However, as the discussions progressed, it became clear that our visions to ensure the support of all LGBTQIA students at The Claremont Colleges did not match, and that we could not reconcile our paths. These decisions were made by Dean Jan and me. The QRC staff were not responsible for the decisions.

As for the next steps in launching a new search, we are consulting with the other campuses, as the QRC is a shared resource. We will be putting together a new search committee, to start meeting in early fall, and we welcome your interest.

Dean Jan and I are available, and want to hear your thoughts, questions, and concerns, including about what this means for the future of the QRC, how the decisions have impacted our communities, how it may affect the QRC's ability to provide direct support to students, expertise in workshops and trainings, and its ability to provide an inclusive and safe space for all its constituencies.

Sincerely,

Dean Feldblum

For The Future

Short-Term Goals

1. A formal apology to Dr. Higgins and statement of the wrong that has been done.
2. An explanation of why a decision that affects a 5C resource was made seemingly unilaterally, with the involvement of only Pomona staff.
3. A statement of college policy for what constitutes a fireable offense with regards to social media posts: does a statement need to not align with the college's mission? Be found distasteful by the Board of Trustees?
4. An explanation as to why this employment decision that affects queer students so directly was made without consulting any of the QRC staff or any queer students on campus.
5. Description of the process for hiring Dr. Higgins' replacement, with particular focus on safeguards and steps to ensure that the hiring process selects someone who will be an ally to and advocate for queer students of color.

Long-Term Goals

6. A roadmap with specific timeframes for steps to be taken to ensure this type of hiring debacle does not occur again.
7. A broader discussion to amplify the voices of QTPOC students on campus: why is the QRC seen as an unwelcoming space for QTPOC, and what can be done to change that?

8. Discussion of the issues facing the QRC and how we as a community can address them, specifically the QRC's under-funding and under-staffing, focusing on changes for the future.

As a note: we are not calling for the resignation of any Deans of Pomona College or otherwise, as we do not have the information necessary to pin blame on any particular administrator. Nevertheless we do believe that the events described above are serious and merit action and work so that Claremont can be a positive community for queer students of color.

In Solidarity,

Concerned QTPOC and Accomplices of the Claremont Colleges

Sherwin Shabdar, PO '18, President, 5C Mental Health Alliance, Head Sponsor '16-'17
Rowan Rumley-Wells, PO '19, Director of Disability & Mental Health Advocacy '17-'18, QQAMP Mentor '16-'17
Daniela Nicole Sada Doan, PO '19, '16-'17 IDEAS President, '17-'18 IDEAS Head Mentor, '17-'18 Claremont Colleges Buddhism President
Dray Denson PO '20, Black, queer, and nonbinary student; OBSA mentor 2017-2018, Draper Center volunteer 2016-present, Sponsor 2017-2018
Michael Mao, PO '19
Miranda Klinck, PZ '20, '17-'18 Rainbow People Collaborative co-leader
Justin Lee, PO '20
Elizabeth Murphy, Scripps '19
Sidney Butler, PO '20
Emily Cao, HMC '19
Clarissa Worcester, PO '19, OEC Staff, Prison Abolition Club
Samantha Borje, PO '19, Women's Union Staff, ISMP Mentor 1617, ASPC Director of Disability and Mental Health Advocacy 1617
Cam Bacca, PO '19, QQAMP, HEO
Shai Goldberg, PO '19
Jules Griffin, Scripps '19, QRC staffer (white queer accomplice)
Lushia Anson, PO '19
Sophie Zagerman, PO '18, Sponsor '15-'16
Victor Bene, PZ '19, Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow, Africana Studies, Robert Redford Conservation Fellow
Gabi Mehta, PO '18
Indigo Olson, Scripps '20
Gabrielle Garcia, Scripps '19, QQAMP mentor
Eve Kaufman, Scripps '20
William Schumacher, PO '18
Deedee Chao, CMC '17
Sarah Ramos, PO '20, Sponsor '17-'18

Aileen Dinh, CMC '17, past VSA Board Member
Ryan Palmer, PO '18
Laurel Hilliker, PO '18, ASPC Commissioner of External Affairs '17-'18, Head Sponsor '16-'17
Erin Angelini, PO '18
Mark Penrod, PO '18, Sponsor '15-'16
Chaelee Dalton, PO '19, Sponsor '16-'17
Sabrina Mendez, PO '18, Mental Health Alliance President, EASY Mentor
Aidan Moore, PO '20
Devin Mercier, PO '20, Quest Mentor
Sagarika Gami, PO '18, Advocate for Survivors of Sexual Assault, AARC Intern
Emily Freilich, PO '18
Alexandra Sanchez, PO '17, Quest, PSS
Rebecca Harvey, PO '19, Sponsor '16-'17
Daniella Wharton, PO '19
Eberto Andre Ruiz, PO '19
Sarah Gissinger, CMC '17
Meter Mason, PO '18
Andy Pelos, PO '19, ASPC VP of Campus Events '17-'18, Sponsor '16-'17, QQAMP mentor '16-'17
Ronak Bhatia, HMC '19, QQAMP Mentor, DIDA Leader, ASHMC Diversity Director
Eugine Choo, PO '19
Teofanny Saragi, PO '18, AARC Intern, Draper Coordinator, ASPC Commissioner of Community Relations, Quest
Vy Doan, PO '18, VSA, AARC, Sponsor
Kripa Mehta, SC '19, AASP Sponsor '16-'17, Diversity & Inclusivity Chair '17
Lillian Horin, PZ '17
Kevin Kandamby, PZ '19, Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow
Diana Rodriguez, PO '19, '16-'17 Sponsor, '17-'18 IDEAS Head Mentor
Nathania Hartojo, PO '20, Sponsor '17-'18
Hans Zhou, PO '20, Sponsor '17-'18
Hannah Sands, SC '17
Kristine Lee, PO '17
Victoria Hernandez, PZ '17
Peter Brown, PO '19, Sponsor '16-'17
Lauren Hartz, SC '18
Jolo Labio, PO '20, ISMP mentor, PSU member
Carly Winant, PZ '18
Josh Anderson, PO '19
Olivia Wood, PO '19, MERGE mentor, Women's Union Staff
Eric Cooper, PO '18
Fernando Barceló, PO '20, LEGS Student Coordinator '17-'18, Sponsor '17-'18
Joanna Chang, PO '19, Quest Mentor, Chemistry/Biology Mentor, Quantitative Skills Center Mentor

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Cam Finley, CMC '20
Sahana Mehta, SC '20, AARC Intern, SAMP mentor
Melissa Zavala, PO '19
Nina Posner, SC '17
Nick Imparato, PO '20
Ian Descamps, PO '19
Martha Parker, SC '18
Forrest Glenn Mans, SC '19
Chance Kavar, PZ '17, M.E.S.A
Maria Jose Vides, PO '18, ASPC President, Latinx Alliance Founder and President '16-'17,
Head Sponsor '16-'17
Alison Choi, PO '19, Sponsor '17-'18, Women's Union Staff '17-'18, AARC Intern, Student
Representative on President's Advisory Committee on Diversity
Laura Kent, SC '18, Former QRC Staffer
Mahala Bryant, PO '18, Quest
Milagros Montalvo, PO '18, QRC Staffer
Filip Skrziesinski, PO '17
Esther Cheung, PO '17
Courtney Chan, CMC '17
Alicia Goode-Allen, SC '19
Jonathan Contreras, PO '18
Juanita Graham, PO '19, QQAMP Mentor
Ruby Kim, PO '17
Joseph Reynolds, PO '15, QTPOC Alum