

2019 National Bike Summit: A Commitment to Increasing Diversity on Campus through the Cultivation and Integration of Bicycle Transportation

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Project Abstract

I am seeking a grant from the Race and Social Justice Initiative to provide funding for my participation in the 2019 National Bike Summit. My motivation to attend this conference stems from my goals of develop programing that can generate meaningful social changes at the College of Charleston and in the Charleston community. The scholarship would cover the cost of early bird registration, travel, and accommodations if necessary. Attending the Bike Summit would allow me to better understand the methods, challenges, and best practices of increasing bike use for transportation by college students. I am deeply passionate about the empowerment and opportunity that bike transportation provides users, and I believe that by making those benefits accessible to the black population it can ameliorate some of the racial disparities that exist in Charleston County.

Statement of Need

Despite concerted efforts of many departments at the College of Charleston, the data shows that there are some very real and persistent issues affecting black students. Our diversity statistics fail to show any notable growth in the number of black students in the last two decades. As a college in a city that struggles to remedy the inequalities outlined in “The State of Racial Disparities in Charleston County, South Carolina,” we have a responsibility to make real and necessary changes. These inequities are interconnected and thus more complex than an isolated problem. Lack of access to healthy food and medical care, the gentrification of historically black neighbors, and inequities in housing and work opportunities make up just some of the complex web of oppression that is lived by black residents. This web has been built upon since slavery existed and continues to institutionalize racist policies and practices on many levels today. Dismantling this requires a creative and co-produced approach that fights the system of oppression from all directions. While it may seem strange to some, I know that bikes can be the intertwining link between resilient social, economic, and environmental development. They are instruments of social justice because they revolutionize mobility, provide economic freedom, and bring physical and emotional health benefits to riders.

Program Description

The Bike Summit provides workshops, resources, and connections that will allow me to be better prepared to develop and execute plans to facilitate the use of bikes for transportation. The savings realized from this mode switch can help make the College of Charleston be a more

financially realistic option for black students who may not be as economically privileged as their white peers. Bikes are not just a simple joy, but a way to access affordable transportation. Affordable transportation is necessary to meet basic needs and to get to jobs, medical facilities, and educational opportunities.

Expected Results

Increasing programming and infrastructure on campus to support bike transportation will set a precedent for all of Charleston. Providing these transportation and economic opportunities and the corresponding benefits is not a zero-sum game, as it will not have negative impacts on others on campus. The positive outcomes of my bicycle-friendly university vision will contribute to a more equitable and accessible campus for black students, as well as all who choose to be part of the bicycle community at the college.

Final Statement

Our economic and social diversity at the College is under a microscope right now, and rightfully so. The events that have occurred or sometimes, failed to occur here, are proof that we are failing to institutionalize equity and fair distribution of opportunity. The College of Charleston has a chance to move to forefront of sustainable and equitable humanitarianism in higher education. The experience and information from the National Bike Summit can be built upon and expanded in ways that will help remedy the racial disparities that exist on campus and in the Charleston community. As a current social activist, I am confident that sometimes simple solutions to complex problems can seem unlikely to succeed. The success of increasing bike transportation in other cities and by other universities emboldens me and has convinced me that approach is one of many steps to take to create a new paradigm in which racial disparities are effectively and responsibly eradicated.