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92 days of continued protest in downtown Ashland

EVAN LAUX
News Editor

As the Black Lives Matter movement continues to grow across the nation, the Ashland community marked their 92nd day of continued protesting today at the intersection of Main Street and Claremont Avenue.

The protesting began informally by Keon Singleton on June 4, who took his first stand against police brutality throughout downtown Ashland.

Equipped with a sign that read, "if you were my color, who would you want to raise kids in the system we live in today?" Singleton jogged up and down Main Street shouting his message.

"I was expecting people to ignore me," Singleton said. "I knew there was a lot of racism in town and it's super small, so I really wasn't expecting people to tag along."

Singleton was wrong.

Three people joined him in the rain that day, and on that first weekend, 100 people gathered with him on the side of the road.

The protests in Ashland began 10 days after Minneapolis man George Floyd lost his life after a police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes. Floyd's death prompted protests across the country and the world; Ashland was no different.

"I was sitting by the light and some kid ran beside my car and screamed 'Black Lives Matter,'" Ashland protestor Heather Sample

said. "I thought sure they do, so I went down the street and came back up, and almost every day since then I've been here protesting."

According to Sample, the protesters get a lot of hostility day-to-day from passing motorists. She says that one driver in particular passes almost every day yelling offensive rhetoric.

"I can't go every single day anymore because I have my own personal life and have kids, but even when I'm not there, there's people there every day," Singleton said. "We want to get as many people in town aware of what we're trying to do as possible because a lot of people either don't understand our message, or are very antagonistic towards it."

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, less than 2% of Ashland's approximately 20,000 residents and less than 1% of Ashland County's approximately 50,000 residents are African American.

"Being a part of the less than 1% Hispanic communities in this town, I am aware of the bubble this town lives in," Ashland protestor Rafael Serrano said. "They don't think they have a problem because well, they barely see any minorities. We are here and we've been living here. We are a face. We are humans."

Serrano regularly attends the protests with his Black Lives Matter centric artwork that he puts on display.

Amid the growing BLM protests



EVAN LAUX

Ashland artist Rafael Serrano posing with one of his BLM pieces.

across Ashland and the country, an Instagram page run by an anonymous user named "Dear Ashland" has surfaces. It addresses different forms of discrimination and social issues that take place at AU by dis-

playing anonymous submissions from the campus community.

Dear Ashland's first post on July 1 reads: "As students of color at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), it can be difficult and dis-

heartening to exist in a space that does not always make room for us to show up authentically. The university has not done enough to protect and value its students of color. Now it is time for our voices to be heard, to be elevated, and to be used for change. We encourage you to share your stories about prejudices you have encountered at Ashland (racism, homophobia, etc.). Let your truths be heard."

The account has amassed 642 followers since its creation, most of them AU students.

The account's submissions have covered a wide range of issues including racism, sexism, homophobia, islamophobia, sexual assault, harassment, cultural bias and others.

"It's good that there's people coming forth and we need more and more exposure to this stuff so that it's realized as a real issue," Singleton said. "This is a small predominantly white campus, but I was a student at Kent State and Malone - much larger universities, and they had the same issues. That's why these movements are so important. You see these issues all over the country."

Singleton believes that there is a simple solution to discriminatory issues on campus and across the globe.

"In short, love thy neighbor and avoid judgement," he said. "It's just like the golden rule but we aren't following that in this day and age. 'Treat others just how you want to be treated.'"

Freshman enrollment numbers drop, positivity remains

President Campo talks sunsetted majors, new strategic plan and future of AU

AVAERIE FITZGERALD
Managing Editor

Over the course of the few months, Ashland University has undergone cuts, layoffs and furloughs while adjusting to the new rules and regulations regarding COVID-19.

These cuts were partly brought on by the sunseting of certain majors and minors, one of those being theatre.

President Dr. Campo said there were seven or eight students majoring in theatre.

"It wasn't just that [the number of majors], an upgrade would probably be a 20-million dollar facility to get that right and to re-do CFA. Not to say that that might not happen in five or ten years or sometime in the future, said Campo.

Focus was emphasized on the majors that were bringing in students, those that were sunsetted showed some of the lowest enrollment numbers.

"While we've reduced some of the majors within undergrad, we don't see that as an overall reduction in number [enrollment] at the university," said Campo.

Amid these changes, the school did not stop functioning.

During the All-Institutional meeting on Aug. 25, the new enrollment numbers were released. While these numbers remain fluid due to students that may opt out before the census is taken later this month, there is a decrease in en-

rollment of about 96 students.

There are currently 446 new freshman students, according to Director of Admissions Wray Blair. This number follows last year's total of 542 new freshman students.

The amount of transfer students is almost a match from last year. There are 117 transfers, compared to last year's total of 112, which can be found on the Fall Census Enrollment Reports released by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

When asked about the predictions of continuous decrease in the freshman student enrollment, Campo said, "I think we will stabilize, not decrease. We've been talking about a student body of around 2,000 to 2,500 — we believe that 500 freshmen is about right for us."

The school hopes to stabilize and reach a steady population for the undergraduate program in coming years.

Reaching enrollment status is not solely handled from within majors, the admissions team used quarantine to introduce the university through online tours and Zoom events for prospective students.

"We pivoted very quickly to an online format, which was zoom meetings," Blair said. "We had transfer days and group meetings, but students could also do individual meetings where they took a tour online."

While the admissions team lost events in the spring, which attracted the largest crowd of interested

students, they added an extra tour day to open more times up to visitors.

"We started giving tours on July 6. We worked closely with our facilities people and developed a plan of three families [on campus] a day," Blair said. They had to social distance, wear masks and schedule a set time."

Tour dates are now Monday, Wednesday and Thursday and Admissions plan to continue that through the year, said Blair.

New students and returning students are met with the same expectations this year - get through the school year healthy and finish your time here without necessary delays.

"Our goal is to get everybody through [the year] healthy and for students to meet their academic goals," said Campo.

Alongside the plans of more tours to bring in students, there are plans of a new strategic plan for 2021. Campo revealed that it is now in the finalizing stage.

"When we think about Ashland five years from now we want every student to feel that accent on the individual, so that's one of the things we're really working hard on- it's something called the Ashland Promise. We're hoping to run that out in the next few weeks."

The Ashland Promise is a new marketing campaign, but also linked to AU's core values, according to Campo.

"No matter which students you

are, there will be an individual directed just for you," Campo said. "We think it's one of the things that has separated us from other schools."

One source of success for AU has been the Correctional Education program and the Online Graduate program, which Campo is working into the strategic plan.

Campo referred to the Correctional Education program as an "area of growth" during the All-Institutional Meeting.

There were 38 new hires for this school year, many are Arizona site directors who work with the Outreach Program. More facilities were mentioned to be added to the Outreach Program during the meeting.

Ashland is a really diverse place now, said Campo.

"We have a great undergraduate school, which as you know, we've contracted a bit - focusing on the ones we still have in place," Campo said.

Ashland classes will now reach 11 states with the online and correctional program outreach.

"When you think about the fact that we will be in graduate programs reaching students from all over the country, that we have the undergraduate population here, but also undergraduate students doing degree completion from all over the country - it really shows the Ashland reach in a broader way," said Campo.

Sunsetted programs:

Bachelor of Science:

Athletic Training
Physics
Geology
Geoscience Technology Management,
*Public Health was not launched

Education secondary licensure:

Physical Science
Chemistry
Earth Science
BSEd programs in French and Spanish education
Middle Grades/Intervention Specialist program

Bachelor of Arts:

Health and Risk Communications
Computer Art and Graphics Programming
Economics
Spanish and French
Music Industry track and performance track within the Bachelor of Arts in Music
Hospitality Management of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration.

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