

# opinion

## Open letter: “Work is yet to be done”

**Melan White**  
Black Student Alliance President

President Campo and Mr. Al King,  
A women’s basketball player received the following message this past weekend “Ashland is finally starting to win games without you ni\*\*ers.”

I, as a black student and black athlete, am shaken to the core by this message. This action, motivated by prejudice, cannot be called anything but a hate crime. There is no justification in this person’s actions or intentions. I will be awaiting your response and subsequent action to this hate crime.

If you do nothing, you have made the conscious decision to be complacent. Once you have sided with complacency, to me you have given racism a steady home on this campus. If you send a campus-wide email and follow that up with half-hearted diversity training, to me you have made the decision to be performative yet again. In being performative, you are revealing that the protection of students of color is

not included in your mission, vision, or core values.

We have seen incidents like this before both within the athletics department and within the general campus community. Something has to change. A campus climate in which racially charged language and actions are taking place year after year is unacceptable. This racist climate, if left unchecked by the highest powers of the University, undermines the efforts of The Office of Diversity & Inclusion and all other groups that are working towards making Ashland an equitable and inclusive place for all students.

Feeling the need to write a second letter irritates, angers, and disappoints me. Incidents such as this one do not make me proud to be a student or an athlete as Ashland University. If anything, they make me concerned for the future of black students and athletes. Shifting the culture of the institution should start before moments like these, but I hope this occurrence serves as a wakeup call for everyone on how much work is yet to be done.

## Response to White’s letter

**Submitted by AU Public Relations**

Ashland University this weekend voiced its support of AU Eagles team members and Women’s Basketball coach Kari Pickens, who posted a video on social media decrying an online racist message sent privately to one of her players following the team’s GLIAC tournament quarter-final victory over Northwood University.

Shortly after the game, Pickens said, the player – a female student of color – received a message through a personal social media account saying “Ashland is finally starting to win games without you ...” followed by a racial slur.

“No person should ever have to experience that,” an emotional Pickens, an AU alumna in her third year as head coach, said in the video. “We have to do more, because black lives do matter.”

The sender of the message had no affiliation with Ashland University, has never been on the campus, but is believed to have known the player from her success at a high school in the region. The team member, Pickens said, is “kind and smart and funny and forgiving and full of life.”

In the video, Pickens said she was very angry, but decided to pray and encourage anyone who saw her video join her: “To the individual with hate in his heart, God’s love is bigger than your hate. ... I will pray for you. Our team will pray for you. And I have no doubt the young lady that you self-righteously deemed unworthy will pray for you, because this team will choose love.”

The player who endured these comments has asked that no action be taken against the author, and Coach Pickens received immediate and resounding support from across the Ashland University and athletic community for her sensitive and compassionate response in support of her team member.

“We thank Coach Pickens for her extraordinary response to this written attack against one of our student athletes. It is sickening and sad to think that some in our community have been raised in darkness and continue to propagate the discrimination they have learned and embraced,” said AU President Dr. Carlos Campo. “No student at Ashland University should have to endure such abuse. There is no place for these sentiments in our community.”

“There are no words of comfort that can even form at this moment because this cuts me at my very core as a Black woman who is also a professor at this University,” said Dr. Judy Alston, chair of the Department of Leadership Studies and acting director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. “However, prayer does work and so does education and we have much work to do.”

Ashland University continues to reject and abhor the racial hatred expressed to our student athlete, and we stand with her in support and solidarity against the forces of ignorance that continue to infect some members of our society. We affirm that we not only support our African American students, but we celebrate them as an integral part of our campus community. While we cannot control the ignorant comments that may come to our students via social media, we will support them in every way to ensure they continue to feel safe and welcomed as part of our Ashland University family. Finally, we want to emphasize that the person who wrote the message is not welcome on our campus for athletic events or any other purpose.

“NO STUDENT AT ASHLAND UNIVERSITY SHOULD HAVE TO ENDURE SUCH ABUSE. THERE IS NO PLACE FOR THESE SENTIMENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY.”  
- DR. CARLOS CAMPO

## Would having a spring break decrease burnout?



JORDANN LOPATA

Jordann Lopata and Jillian Rekulak in CO for spring break 2020

**ZOE BOGARTY**  
Reporter

Spring break is the third most anticipated vacation time for students, next to winter and summer break. It’s time for vacation, traveling, and most importantly a week off of school. Because of COVID-19, all of that is canceled, and nobody’s happy about it.

It’s no new knowledge that most schools are canceling their spring break to prevent students from traveling and keeping covid numbers down. That does not mean students have to be happy about the solutions. As most of us know, Ashland University has also found ways to prevent the spread by canceling spring break and introducing “flex days”.

Flex days are two days of the semester

THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN MY FIRST SPRING BREAK EXPERIENCE, BUT UNFORTUNATELY IT DOESN’T EXIST. IT’S JUST ANOTHER WEEK OF CLASSES, TRYING TO MEET THAT 11:59 DEADLINE, AND GOING TO WORK.

where students don’t have to worry about attending classes in person or online. They are a great thing to have, but they don’t make up for a week of vacation.

This should have been my first spring break experience, but unfortunately it doesn’t exist. It’s just another week of classes, trying to meet that 11:59 deadline, and going to work.

I can only speak for myself in this discussion, but without a spring break, I’m feeling a bit overwhelmed and the days are starting to melt together.

Every day feels like a never-ending Monday, then suddenly it’s Friday, and then back to Monday in the blink of an eye.

Imagine that nonstop for sixteen weeks with no time separation in between. It sounds awful if you ask me.

Even with the two flex days in between, it does not supplement a full break because we still have work we could or should be doing. Going to school during a pandemic is harder, but having to go nonstop is unbearable.

The only highlight about not having a spring break is that we are almost to week eight. Even though we started a week late, we are already pretty much halfway through, but still half more to go.

I understand canceling spring break is a way to stop the spread and keep other students safe while living on campus, it’s just harder to gain that “normal” college experience when one of the greatest weeks on campus is canceled. Then again, nothing this year falls under the category of “normal”.

Either way, I do appreciate the steps being taken by the school to slow the spread, but we are just one in a million.

I can’t speak for other AU students since I am only just in my first year, but I do feel like the school should have a better alternative to spring break so burnout isn’t as high for some students.

## the Collegian

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