



Institute for Critical Race and
Ethnic Studies
(ICRES)
Research-Study-Teach-Action
<https://wordpress.lehigh.edu/cres/>



May 27, 2021

Statement from ICRES Regarding the \$2.5 Million Gift from Charlie and Ruth Marcon

As the only research institute on campus founded and led by faculty and students of color who organized around racial justice on campus, we are excited to lead work on “racial justice research” at Lehigh that will be supported by a 2.5-million-dollar donation by Charlie and Ruth Marcon.

#WeAreLehigh

First, **we want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Marcons for their generous donation.** We are grateful and excited because we at ICRES know exactly how it will benefit Lehigh through our ongoing research in the Lehigh Valley, including our community and national partners such as Bethlehem Area School District, Lehigh Valley Health Network, Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley, Ripple Community Inc, Center for Antiracism Research for Health Equity at the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities, Teaching for Change, Swarthmore, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, City University of New York, Puerto Rico Research Hub in University of Central Florida, and the Pennsylvania Executive and Legislative Joint Racial Equity Subcommittee for COVID-19 vaccines.

Second, we want to recognize that our work was included in conversations with Mr. Marcon. **However, we were not included in recent university announcements— our ongoing work and existing research institute on racial justice was unrecognized in the process of, and the announcement creating the new Marcon Institute.**

Third, we note with honor that ICRES has been doing extraordinary work in the University, the Lehigh Valley, in the State and nationally. With very little, we have been exceeding the expectations of our colleagues, alumni and students who called for institutional support and funding for our work last summer. For example, in a June 3, 2020 letter to President Simon and Board of Trustees Chairman Kevin Clayton, 2,385 Lehigh faculty, students and alumni demanded that the University *“fully fund Ethnic Studies and Critical Race Studies. Faculty and staff of color, with training in this specialized field, need to set the agenda around race on our campus. We must center their voices, while also providing them with ample resources, and with supportive labor from their colleagues.”*



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Similarly, in their letter to Lehigh Leadership dated June 9, 2020, BALANCE (Black and Latinx Alumni Network for Community and Equity) demanded that Lehigh “*use critical ethnic studies as a framework to combat anti-blackness and anti-racism. This includes fully funding Critical Ethnic Studies ...*”

Fourth, we met with the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity on May 10, 2021 to know how ICRES’ work and vision (that we have articulated several times to the administration) differs from the new Marcon Institute. We noted that the later, so far, is a co-option of women of color faculty’s research and labor which is consistent with the university’s history of violence against scholars of color. And that the deliberate exclusion of ICRES from conversations about the gift, when our work was used in the proposal to secure the gift, was inconsistent with the pursuit of racial justice. We were told that ICRES is different from the Marcon Institute because “the gift is new” and that the Marcon Institute could be leveraged to support ICRES. Our founding co-directors were asked to be part of shaping the Marcon Institute without any mention of what compensation for that labor would look like, and with complete disregard for institute-building work they had already done. We were also told that decisions for funding a director position and fellows have already been made and that ICRES needs to be having conversations with stakeholders, but it was unclear how those conversations were to be organized.

We do not know what else is happening. We have not been contacted again. **As conversations about our communities and our labor continue to happen without us, we just want to restate who we are:**

#WeAreLehigh, #WeAreICRES

- 1) Established in 2019, the ICRES is the ***first and only*** research institute dedicated to antiracism, anti-sexism and anticolonial praxis in research designs at Lehigh.
- 2) We are the first and only research institute at Lehigh **founded and led by women of color faculty.**
- 3) We are the only research institute “**born of struggle and demand**” by **students of color leaders at Lehigh** from the Black Student Union and Latinx Student Alliance. Students continue to form part of our decision-making practices and our board.
- 4) We are designed with [education justice](#) and [health justice](#) research platforms based on ***our faculty strengths and training, and these are our intellectual property.***



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Finally, we have, over the past year, requested institutional support for our work. We list these requests here:

#ImmediateActions

- 1) Creation of infrastructure to retain current and imminent (including Marcon donation) financial resources to recruit and retain our faculty and student research including faculty salary, course releases, graduate, and postdoc and research associate lines.
- 2) Postdoctoral pipeline program (part of original proposal to research)
- 3) Building and facilities to house team including new postdoc and researchers coming in Fall and to protect out data and archival materials.
- 4) Equipment and resources, including a designated coordinator or staff person to support continuing Ed Justice and Health Justice projects in Lehigh Valley and beyond.
- 5) A one course release per year for our directors so they can develop and continue conducting racial justice research, as well as supervise student work.

We believe, like the Faculty, Students, and Alumni have articulated in their letters to University leadership, that support for ICRES and our requests are consistent with Lehigh's goals of becoming actively anti-racist, and with the Principles of Our Equitable Community.

Sincerely,
ICRES Team