



Advocate Talking Points

1. Why is Saint Ben's supporting this scholarship?

As Anna Mercedes, chair of the Theology Department, says, "Our Benedictine values call us to do this." Saint Ben's was founded to provide access to higher education for first-generation immigrant women who were disenfranchised and often regarded unworthy of higher education. It is in our very DNA to support diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. Saint Ben's has made a strong commitment to supporting women of color through scholarship support, through financial support for experiential learning and internships, and through mentoring and campus programming to help women thrive. As a college for women, we feel it is especially important to remember women who have been victims of police violence. Thus, with support and guidance of alumnae, we have established the Breonna Taylor Scholarship for Racial Justice. The scholarship will support women from underrepresented communities with financial need, with special consideration given to Black and African-American women.

2. Is this scholarship joint and what is Saint John's doing right now on this topic?

This scholarship will be housed at the College of Saint Benedict and will support Bennies. Saint John's is also committed to creating a Racial Justice Scholarship Fund at Saint John's University in memory of George Floyd. Saint Ben's and Saint John's are separate institutions with separate endowments and separate 501(c)(3) statuses. Therefore, the scholarships need to be separately housed at each institution.

3. Why did the response to the petition take so long?

As soon as Saint Ben's received the petition, we began to work with alumnae leaders to plan the naming, purpose, funding and communication surrounding the scholarship. We also reached out to Saint John's in order to work together. As you can imagine, coordinating the various stakeholders takes time. We felt it was important to be thoughtful and careful in creating this scholarship, especially since we are sharing this news with our entire alumnae population and inviting them to make gifts of support.

4. This doesn't seem like an inclusive scholarship. Isn't this reverse racism?

Saint Ben's acknowledges that centuries of racist systems, structures, policies and actions mean that women of color have not always had access to the financial resources, support and social capital that majority white students have. This scholarship, along with the over \$11 million in other endowed scholarships dedicated to women from underrepresented communities, are a start in rectifying that wrong. Ninety-five percent of Bennies receive financial aid, so scholarship support is available for white women as well as women of color.

5. We heard there was a second petition asking CSB/SJU to commit to being anti-racist institutions. What is the status of that petition?

The petition was delivered to Saint Ben's and Saint John's in the latter part of July. Interim Presidents Hamen and McAllister have crafted a joint response that provides information about current and recent

efforts to create an anti-racist community and also identifies commitments for future work. Both schools acknowledge that we have much work to do in order to become communities that deeply respect BIPOC students. Saint Ben's and Saint John's are grateful for the alumnae who have called the colleges to account and consider these alumnae to be allies in our work to create an anti-racist and transformative inclusive community.

6. Is this scholarship anti-police?

The College of Saint Benedict has alumnae who are in law enforcement and/or who have loved ones in law enforcement. The recent killing of George Floyd at the hands of officers in the Minneapolis Police Department has spurred global protests about police violence against people of color. Police departments across the country have decried the killing of George Floyd and have begun to implement changes to ensure that all officers are equipped to respond effectively and fairly as they conduct their work. The college's recent creation of the Breonna Taylor Scholarship for Racial Justice is a public stand in support of anti-racism in all aspects of our society, including in law enforcement. We stand with others, including those in law enforcement agencies, who share this commitment and are working to create a just and equitable society. We are proud of our alumnae whose educations have been shaped by the Benedictine values and who are committed to use of the law to make our country a better place.