

1968 Student Unrest collection

Repository: Delaware State University Archives
William C. Jason Library
1200 N. DuPont Highway; Dover, DE 19901
302-857-6130

Creator: Office of the President

Date: 1968-1971

Location: Unassigned

Extent: 0.5 linear feet

Language: English

Source of Acquisition: Office of the President. Transfer initiated by Tracy Channel of the Public Relations department in September 2015. This collection was separated from the cumulative 345 linear feet that comprised the transfer.

Conditions Governing Access: This collection is open to public viewing with some exceptions. Folders containing the names of student participants are restricted – Leroy Tate, Student Government Association and Student Participants and apologies.

Conditions Governing Use: US Code Title 17 applies. Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from Delaware State University.

Related Materials: Tate Saga, located in the vertical file.

Abstract:

The 1968 Unrest collection details the events surrounding the DSC student demonstrations led by the Student Government Association in May 1968. In the midst of the civil rights movement, students were frustrated not only by the contemporary political and social climates of the nation, but also of Delaware State College. They sought a diversity of campus changes including less restrictive visitation rights and better rodent control in the dormitories, extended library hours, the development of black studies academic courses, and enhanced community with the city of Dover. In order to voice their dissatisfaction the students interrupted the dedication ceremony of the Martin Luther King Student Center and a men's dormitory.

This collection contains materials created by college administrators in preparation of the MLK Student Center and Medgar Evers dormitory dedication ceremony as well as materials generated in the wake of the demonstration. Materials of the latter variety include documentation of disciplinary actions against students, Board of Trustee meeting materials, reactionary correspondence from students, parents, alumni, and the Dover community. News clippings are also found here.

Scope and Content:

This collection is comprised of materials relating to preparations for the May 10, 1968 dedication ceremony of the Martin Luther King Jr. Student Center and Medgar Evers dormitory, the student disruption of the ceremony, and the student occupation of Grossley Hall on May 16, 1968.

Material types include: planning documents for the dedication ceremony, event invitations and replies, the dedication program, Board of Trustees meeting records, reactionary

correspondence and telegrams from the college community, correspondence exchanged between Leroy Tate and President Mishoe, and news clippings. The materials are dated between 1968 and 1971.

Administrative History:

On May 10, 1968 students disrupted the dedication of the first MLK Student Center, which had been constructed in 1967, and the then-unnamed men's dormitory #2. The students were frustrated that an appeal to name the dormitory after Medgar Evers, written one month earlier, had gone unheeded. A rowdy but small group of students marched across campus chanting "Student Power!" before coming to a halt outside the student center where the ceremony was taking place. The dedication speeches were interrupted when the Student Government Association President, Leroy Tate, took the stage and reportedly proceeded to name the dormitory before an incensed President Mishoe and Governor Terry.

Disciplinary action against the students was swift. All the participants in the demonstration were suspended until such a time as they submitted a letter of apology. This course of action by college administrators incited the frustrations of the larger student body. A week after the dedication the student body occupied Grossley Hall which at the time served as the administration building. In addition to protesting Tate's suspension, student demands were diverse and included extended library hours, relaxed restrictions for dormitory visitations, better rodent control within the dorms, and the inclusion academic classes centered upon African American culture into the college curriculum.

When Governor Terry heard word of the second student demonstration he dispatched the National Guard and State Police. One month prior, in April, violent riots broke out across Wilmington. As such, the governor directed the National Guard to relocate from Wilmington and proceed to Dover.

In the end the student body returned to the MLK student center to dialog with President Mishoe. Their demands were largely met, but Leroy Tate was still suspended indefinitely.

Box and Folder Listing:

Box 1:

Series 1: Dedication Ceremony Preparation:

- Dedication ceremony invitations and replies, 1968
- Dedication planning documents, 1968
- Dedication program, May 10, 1968
- Dedication Remarks, May 10, 1968

Series 2: Student Involvement:

- Leroy Tate, Student Government Association President, 1968-1971
RESTRICTED
- Student body participants and apologies, 1968 RESTRICTED
- Student Government Association, 1968

Series 3: Demonstration Reactions:

- Apologetic correspondence from Dr. Mishoe, 1968
- Board of Trustees perspectives on, 1968
- Community perspectives on, 1968
- Faculty perspectives on, 1968
- Parent perspectives on, 1968
- Politician perspectives on, 1968
- Student perspectives on, 1968

Series 4: Miscellaneous:

1968 Commencement, 1968

News clippings of Delaware State College unrest, 1968

News clippings of state-wide unrest, 1968

May 1 1969 Trustee-Faculty-Student committee report, May 2, 1969

Student Center Budget, 1969

Colophon: Collection was processed by Rejoice Scherry in February 2016.