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**From:** McCormack, Michael <b.mccormack@louisville.edu>

**Sent:** Friday, February 20, 2026 10:16 AM

**Subject:** Dean's GTA Email

The email below, in response to the Dean's email this morning, was returned to me because I did not have "permission" to reply all. I am forwarding it to you all now.

Dear Colleagues,

Dean Touron and I have enjoyed a positive professional relationship to this point, and I trust that relationship will survive this moment. With that said, it is imperative that I respond, at least in part, to this email. There is much to be said, but this is not the forum for that full discussion.

It is not my intention to debate claims of "misinformation" being circulated in public, but rather, as chair, I will speak to my own experience of, and perspective on this decision, how it was communicated, and its impacts on our department.

Let me be clear: I was blindsided by the decision to eliminate all graduate assistantships in Pan-African Studies and to place our graduate program on "pause." We were told to prepare for an approximate 10 percent reduction in assistantships across the College of Arts and Sciences, not the complete removal of support from a single department, and there was no prior indication that a decision of this magnitude was under consideration. As chair, I learned of this decision at the exact same time as everyone else, although our department was the most significantly impacted, bearing the brunt of the loss of assistantships. Although the Dean did, in fact, contact me to set up a meeting once the decision had been made, a decision this drastic warranted nothing less than the courtesy of a heads-up. The demoralizing effect of this decision upon our faculty simply cannot be overstated in a moment when Black faculty, staff, and students already feel abandoned, if not betrayed by our university.

While the administration has described this as a temporary pause, it is difficult to see how a graduate program can meaningfully continue without assistantship support, especially when we have been told that these lines are unlikely to be returned. The uneven and disproportionate way these cuts were implemented raises serious concerns about how financial pressures are being distributed and which programs are bearing the greatest burden. With additional conversations on the horizon about looming budgetary cuts to the College, how could anyone not believe that PAS would

also bear a disproportionate loss with such cuts? Losses that would likely permanently destabilize the department and lead to its demise. So, while there might not be *intent* to dismantle PAS, it is not unreasonable to foresee a series of top-down decisions, made in a similar manner as these GTA decisions, leading to that *effect*. PAS might not be targeted by the university, but neither has it been protected in this political and budgetary climate.

More fundamentally, the value of Pan-African Studies cannot be captured by enrollment data alone. Numbers need narratives, and there is no narrative to be told about PAS (both graduate and undergraduate programs) that does not include administrative decisions dating back to at least 2018, which have led to the sharp decline in our enrollment. Nevertheless, the onus has been placed back on the department, suggesting that we are simply not inspiring students to take our classes, not offering them high-quality educational experiences, and that we have simply “given up.” I will state emphatically that such claims are categorically false. I speak for myself here in saying that I, personally, and my colleagues, have worked tirelessly to attract students to our program in the face of significant challenges that will have to be detailed elsewhere.

For decades, the department has had a transformative impact on students, the university, and the surrounding community. I speak not only as chair of the department, but as a University of Louisville alum whose life and career were made possible, in no small part, by the education I received through Pan-African Studies.

There is so much more to be said, but this space cannot hold it all. For now, I hope our colleagues will agree that PAS is too valuable to this university and community to be viewed only in terms of data analytics. I hope we will all be committed to the investments needed to ensure that our department survives and thrives well into the future.

To those who have reached out, we appreciate your concern and continued support. As always, I welcome further dialogue and conversation.

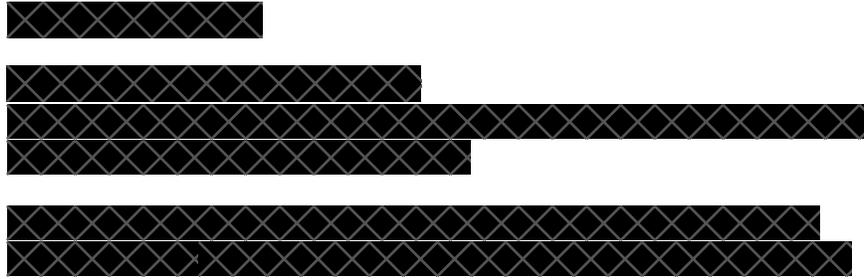
Sincerely,

Brandon

**Michael Brandon McCormack, Ph.D. (he, him, his)**

Chair and Professor, Pan-African Studies  
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