

# RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

BUILDING AN  
INCLUSIVE COLLEGE  
THROUGH AWARENESS,  
ADVOCACY, AND ACTION

EDITED BY KENDRA JASON, Ph.D.

## **RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**



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Building an Inclusive College Through  
Awareness, Advocacy, and Action

EDITED BY

Kendra Jason, PhD



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Suggested citation: Jason, Kendra. *Race and Social Justice:  
Building an Inclusive College Through Awareness, Advocacy, and  
Action*.

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469677408\\_Jason](https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469677408_Jason)

ISBN 978-1-4696-7739-2 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-4696-7740-8 (open access ebook)

Published by J. Murrey Atkins Library at UNC Charlotte  
Distributed by the University of North Carolina Press  
[www.uncpress.org](http://www.uncpress.org)



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## FOREWORD

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### BRANDON WOLFE

Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion, Chief Diversity Officer,  
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Much like larger society, higher education has ebbed and flowed over decades in the struggle to address the issue of racial inequity. To further complicate matters, the United States has recently experienced additional contextual layers which highlight America's racialized complexities. The world was ravaged by a COVID-19 pandemic, which has and continues to test the vulnerabilities of our structural systems and expose healthcare disparities among Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian American communities. In 2020, the death of George Floyd, coupled with the growing frustration of racial progress, resulted in a newly invigorated and global Black Lives Matter movement. While largely championed, this movement and those similar were met with pushback in the landscape of public education where terms such as equity, social justice, and critical race theory were criticized as harmful, politicized, and divisive rhetoric.

As I reflect on these challenges and the importance of *Race and Social Justice: Building an Inclusive College Through Awareness, Advocacy, and Action* as a scholarly contribution to the racial equity conversation in higher education, I am reminded of a time, nearly 20 years ago, when the trend for “diversity work” on many college campuses was typically framed in student-centered celebrations and educational tolerance programs. Discussions about equity were relatively new and represented a coming paradigm shift to challenge how we operationalize diversity to interrogate and unpack structures within higher education as opposed to resting on the mainstream acceptance of diversity as an all-encompassing celebration of cultural programming highlighted by a litany of heritage month–associated foods, festivals, and invited celebrity speakers. For those advancing this work, addressing racial equity would require us to venture into the discomfort of new territories, sit with displeasing data, ask uncomfortable questions, and elevate once-stifled voices to lead critiques on how the institution is not living up to its social contract of community. At the time, a number of colleges and universities chose the approach of maintaining status quo efforts. It was safe and nonconfrontational, and the students—who



far outnumbered the faculty and staff—unanimously enjoyed the associated positivity of campus-wide celebrations.

While some were delighted and looked forward to learning and engaging in these activities, others quietly wondered if such framing diluted racial progress efforts of educating on the importance and needed sensitivity of learning cultural history and the ongoing quest of advocating for equitable opportunities to access and success. For those individuals and groups, it was critical for the community to not lose sight of the remnants of racism and the ongoing power struggle for human and civil rights by people of color and other identities who have been historically marginalized. I recall during my graduate studies one professor who stood before campus leadership and boldly stated, “The Soul Food Festival will not extinguish my concern over the lack of Black students and professors at this university!” Her point was made. Doing this work goes beyond tolerance and cultural celebrations. We must take intentional action to diversify our institutions. This means we must recognize that racial equity efforts do not stop at the identification and removal of barriers to access and success. Racial equity is a continuous process of improvement in exploring ways for us to better our institutions for all.

Although most colleges and universities have expanded their diversity, equity, and inclusion scope and made significant progress, advancement toward equitable representation remains slow. According to a 2022 McKinsey & Company report, *Racial and Ethnic Equity in US Higher Education*, nearly 60% of higher education institutions (both 2-year and 4-year combined) fall short of representational parity for students. And, 9 in 10 have significant gaps to parity for students, faculty, or both. What this tells me is despite our institutional efforts toward education, research scholarship, and community, our intent has yet to meet our impact in attracting the type of representation we seek. Thus, much more research is needed to determine exactly what factor or combination of factors will take us beyond the removal of barriers to being an intentionally inclusive and inviting culture and climate that nourishes racial parity.

Unlike my observations from 20 years ago, racial equity is now part of the mainstream conversation in which *Race and Social Justice: Building an Inclusive College Through Awareness, Advocacy, and Action* continues to evolve in both scholarship and practice. The editor of this book, Kendra Jason, successfully captures the experiences of six college working groups charged with dismantling anti-Black racism and breaking down barriers in the College of Liberal

Arts & Sciences, the largest of seven colleges that make up the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. As the reader, you will gain insight into the individual and collective concern(s) of each contributing author(s), challenges, successes, and experience with the change process. The authenticity of every instance throughout each chapter serves as a clear pathway to the daily intentional efforts needed to advance racial equity for employees and students on college campuses. In doing so, it is my hope that the knowledge gained from this text helps your institution navigate its own structural challenges and maximize each presented opportunity toward institutional transformation.

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## Race and Social Justice

### My Approach and the Resistance

#### KENDRA JASON

Race and Social Justice Advocate, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

**Y**ou will be building the plane while you are flying it.” Those were the words that the (now retired) dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS), Nancy Gutierrez, told me upon our first meeting after I was selected in the role as the inaugural CLAS race and social justice advocate. There was no blue print. No template. No set guidelines. No university-level example of this role. I entered this role with as much caution as I had excitement.

As a matter of fact, when the position was first released, I did not apply. I was well aware of the challenges racially minoritized diversity officers experience such as burnout (Willingham, 2022), road blocks (Corley, Pamphile, and Sawyer, 2022), organizational resistance (Cutter and Weber, 2020), failure (Strachan, 2022), being fired for flagging racial bias (Bunn, 2021) or pushing for diversity (Dunn, 2021). Although over 80% of chief diversity officers are White, and between 2018 and 2021 60% of chief diversity officers at S&P companies left their positions (Shah Paikeday, 2021), the cases highlighted in the media were all of Black and Brown chief diversity officers. My doctorate of sociology is in work and inequality, and as someone with expertise in workplaces, organizational behavior, and racism, I knew why these well-educated, highly experienced, and competent diversity officers were failing. They were hired with unreasonable expectations, little to no resources, no programming budget, little institutional support, and they dealt with institutional racism. They were hired in executive and administrative roles with no authoritative power or institutional influence. They were less than middle managers and often equivalent to advisory roles with no board or supervisor to collaborate with, only to report to.

When the diversity officer is a racialized minority, the role is highly visible, usually being the only person of color, or one of a few, in any work setting; however, the work of a diversity officer is intended to be invisible. The expectation is that the officer works from within the organization, moving chess pieces until the Queen is cornered and institutional racism is dismantled. It's expected to work like magic, as the officer is expected to change the system without disrupting the work process and without holding organizational members accountable—all while making sure the people who uphold racist systems remain comfortable. These expectations exist because when many diversity offices are created, administrators do not account for the support it takes to achieve ongoing organizational commitment such as sustained budget lines, leadership buy-in, full-time support staff, in-depth organizational equity training, policy reassessment with an equity lens, and inclusion in strategic planning and hiring decisions to make the position successful.

There is a pattern in equity work that when institutions embark on an equity-based initiative, many members are on board and verbally (and theoretically) support the efforts. However, when ideas turn into action and when policy changes, privileged members often begin to experience feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, perceived threat to their status, or perceived threat of displacement. Then organizational members resist in a number of ways, including claiming the work is politically motivated, isolating, ineffective, or nonsensical. I knew about these dynamics going in, and they made me cautious. Yet, like most of the diversity officers who take on this role, knowing what I know, we still enter the agreement with excitement for the possibility of change. Before I applied for the role, I spoke with one of the ideators of the position, Sonya Ramsey (see chapter 2). From her, I understood that the role was carefully thought out. The expectations were clear and my autonomy would be solid. The role would come with administrative support, institutional support in the form of time and compensation, and support from the faculty council and other members of CLAS. The efforts were real. The intention was genuine. This is what I needed to embark on this journey.

## **Racial Equity Is Not an Inherent Attribute of the Academy**

In addition to the aforementioned reasons diversity officers are challenged, I must begin with why equity efforts fail. This is not to discourage anyone from this work. This is good and necessary work. Organizations like UNC

Charlotte—a historically and predominantly White institution—is overwhelmingly run by White people (92% White leadership), serves White people (57% undergraduate and 46% graduate students), and hires White people (69% of faculty and 76% of nonfaculty/staff are White) (UNC Charlotte, 2020). In these institutions, institutional and individual racism find comfort as racist actions and policies are hard to identify because they do not directly negatively impact White members. However, these actions and policies have grave consequences for Black and other people of color, including threats to access and promotion; but also negative physical and mental impacts on their well-being, life satisfaction, and ability to provide security for themselves and their families. The academy has a very unique culture that bears weak spots for equity work. If these weak spots are not identified upfront, they may be easily missed or misinterpreted as something else. In the following discussion, I lay out some reasons for why racial equity is uniquely challenging in university settings and my approach to engage in this work in a positive way.

### **Some People Do Not Like to Process Racial Injustice**

When it comes to professional development, by which most equity work is framed, many faculty, instructors, and other academics are often disinterested learners. They bore easy when they think they know the content already. They do not think the racial equity expert has anything nuanced to say, and they spend more time being critical of pedagogical approaches and PowerPoint formatting than the actual lessons at hand. Finally, they prefer spending more time debating the definition of a term rather than the application of it. These are distraction techniques that unintentionally, or deliberately, sabotage racial equity work. Dismantling systemic racism actually takes less talk and more process activities, such as self-reflection, self-work, identification, and accountability. Equity work is less about knowing what you already know, which is stagnant, and more about understanding and processing what you know to make effective race-based equity changes. The latter takes more intellectual work.

For academics steeped in their identities as “experts,” being a “student” again proves challenging; and my colleagues were being led by me, a peer, rather than an outside consultant, in this effort. The same year I began the inaugural CLAS race and social justice advocate role, I was entering my 9th year at UNC Charlotte. I joined UNC Charlotte in 2012 as a lecturer and academic



advisor. I began a tenure-track position in 2015 and earned tenure in 2021. The advocate position instantly increased my visibility, and I was introduced to many CLAS and university members for the first time, even though I had been a faculty member for nearly a decade. For some of my colleagues it was difficult for them to accept insight and guidance from me as I was questioned and challenged on my familiarity with UNC Charlotte policy and practice. In some equity workshops and engagements with faculty, I was met with tension, indifference, or opposition. While I was overwhelmingly supported in the role, the situation of my peers learning from me on my own campus presented a vulnerability that previous academic work did not. Couple that with the content being on racial justice, it seemingly made it difficult for some members to be open-minded and engaged.

My approach to this resistance is to not take the responses of my colleagues personally. In equity training and engagement sessions, some faculty fear being singled out, shamed, blamed, or misrepresented. Fear fosters indifference, insecurity, and guilt, which are internal processes and not a reflection of me, or the expertise I bring to the table. My approach is centered in inclusivity and understanding, which neutralizes off-putting behaviors and attitudes that stem from some agitated colleagues. Years of practicing self-reflection and personal accountability, along with nearly 2 decades of studying inequality and racism in organizational behavior, give me a firm base to stand on.

### **Leadership Resistance and White Fragility/Volatility**

In the highly stratified structure of higher education, leadership comes in many forms such as deans, chairs, directors, and heads. But leadership can be relational as well and can include lead authors, principal investigators, administrators, and staff leaders, for example. Again, in the academy, which is historically White, these roles are often led by White people who experience “White fragility”—a term made famous by Robin DiAngelo (2018) to describe White people’s sensitivity to issues related to racial injustice; this includes White people’s feelings of discomfort and defensiveness when confronted with information about racial inequity and injustice, including their role in it.

In my role as a race and social justice advocate, I have witnessed White fragility during committee and faculty meetings where I was invited to help guide antiracist efforts. I am not deterred by these attitudes and actions, and, again, as an equity expert, I do not take it personally. I do not bear witness to

the White volatility that occurs in faculty/staff meeting spaces in my absence. White volatility is seen in the instances of eruptions of anger, incivility, and intimidation usually expressed by senior members, often in leadership roles, concerning inequitable and/or racist practices that inspire my invitation to the committee or faculty meeting. When I attend these meetings, those members do not show up or they do not repeat the intimidation tactics their peers experience.

When I am charged with handling White fragility and volatility, my approach is centered in humanity and truth. My job is to create the most fair and inclusive environment possible, and I treat all institutional members as having a role in that creation. As I understand that most negative responses to equity work are based in fear and uncertainty, I focus the conversation on shared and human values that benefit all. I do not allow for dissenters to rule the space I am in. I respectfully allow them to *briefly* speak their piece, and then I use my pedagogy skills to turn their remarks into “teaching moments” that support the equity work. And then I move on. It is very hard for some White leaders, and even allies, to not be centered in diverse spaces. In these cases, I model how to be inclusive, yet mindful of not recreating racialized dynamics that decenter marginalized voices and experiences.

## **Institutions Are Slow to Change**

The university is a bureaucratic institution with long-standing policies of checks and balances, approval processes, and standing committees dedicated to review, survey, research, critique, debate, scrutinize, and vote on nearly every matter, including antiracist policy and practice. These processes are a good thing. They are designed to guarantee basic inclusivity in everyday practice. However, the pace of progress is agonizingly slow, and while surveys are being completed or policies are being revised, Black and other faculty, staff, and students of color continue to slip through the cracks and become casualties of institutionalized racism. When we consider that an undergraduate student spends an average of 4 years in college, master’s students an average 2 to 3 years, doctoral students an average of 5 years, and tenure-track faculty are on a 5- to 6-year timeline, our bureaucratic policy change process often lasts longer than the attendance or participation of hundreds of cohorts of university members. In short, the larger organization of the academy, with all its institutional processes, directly impacts (and impedes) equity work.

In cases where academy members are frustrated that the work is taking too long or there is anxiety if the equity work that many have done will fade with time, I remind them that institutions are slow to change, so we must create benchmarks that demonstrate our movement forward. Moving an equity-based policy revision from working group to faculty council consideration is a benchmark. Creating an ad hoc departmental equity committee is a benchmark. Holding a senior faculty member accountable for potentially harmful student interactions is a benchmark. We cannot only acknowledge the end result. We must appreciate the process. We must respect the hard work that moves an idea from one unit to another. My approach is to help my colleagues think of this work as iterative, but forward moving.

I also remind my White colleagues that the frustration they feel when the work is not moving fast enough or to their satisfaction is a direct result of “White urgency”—a consequence of White supremacy culture. White urgency is when White people disparage the time it takes for racial justice to occur. Once White people are activated in racial justice and ally work, they begin to experience the physical exhaustion of repeatedly and emphatically speaking out against racial injustice. They become overwhelmed by the omnipresence of structural racism. They experience mental health challenges as they try to do their part to dismantle White supremacy. They want the pain and discomfort to end, and they often have the naivete to believe that once a policy change they advocated for, a diversity program they created, or an equity committee they sponsored is in place, some of this discomfort will be alleviated. When this does not occur, feelings of urgency kick in.

I remind my colleagues that racial justice work is a long game and we cannot bank our psychological well-being on short-term decisions from mostly White administrators. Yes, racial justice work is urgent. Yes, every win is inspiring and every loss is discouraging. For those of us who have done the work for years, we understand that “urgency” is a product of institutional trust. It is based on the premise that the organization you invest in will return favor to you based on your value and effort. Minoritized members cannot invest or trust White supremacist organizations, which is why we do not lean into urgency.

### **Antiracist Work Treated as Extra Work or “Mesearch”**

As an equity expert, a key strategy or best practice I promote is that antiracist work has to be *central* to your organizational values, policy, and practice. This work cannot be treated as an appendage to what you already do. We do

not improve our antiracist efforts with addition, but rather with embeddedness. For instance, while it is a good strategy to form an antiracist committee or assign an officer to research and inform antiracist practice, it is not solely the responsibility of the committee or individual to do this work. To embed antiracist practice and policy we must reimagine how we do things within the process. Each person must take personal responsibility to identify the equity gaps and find ways to fill them, not assign them to others.

Why does antiracist work feel “extra”? Because it is not recognized, compensated, or rewarded. More notably, this work is often done by Black women and other people of color and treated as “meseach” (Ray 2016), which is research or efforts that examine discrimination and racism or focus on communities of color. Meseach is a slanderous epithet that criticizes objectivity and representation of scholars of color in the social sciences (Ray, 2019). Academic work that does not center White heteronormativity is at risk for threats to legitimacy and open for scrutiny. Even as the academy is moving toward recognizing antiracist work, they have not created or allocated budgets, programming, and positions for long-term support of this work. This lack of formal and institutionalized support impacts the climate and conditions under which equity work is conducted.

### **The Impacts of COVID-19 on Antiracist Efforts**

The murder of George Floyd (May 25, 2020) occurred 7 years after the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement (2013) and only about 3 months into COVID-19 state-mandated lockdowns (March 2020). These conditions helped lead to the dismantling of the anti-Black racist movement in the academy, but many of the initial efforts were hasty and disjointed. When the initial racial uprisings occurred in the summer months of 2020, many people were already overwhelmed with escalating death tolls and infection rates from COVID-19. In May 2020, people still did not know what COVID-19 was or could not comprehend its social impacts. We were scared to touch anything, let alone other human beings. We were in a state of indefinite quarantine. The COVID-19 vaccine would not be available for another 16 months. The operations of the academy were largely put on hold or moved to remote-only interactions.

Yet university members demanded CLAS do something in response to the call for racial justice, beginning with updating diversity statements or conceiving racial justice statements. Although many White members did not want

to burden their Black colleagues, who were dealing with racial fatigue in addition to COVID-19 changes, with this work, overwhelmingly, Black and Brown colleagues were the only experienced people doing the work. This time period presented antiracist reckonings where many White university members recognized, for the first time, the relentlessness of racial harm and Black burdens; and they were ill equipped to step in and step up for their Black colleagues and students and share the responsibility of institutional response and accountability toward racial justice.

During the summer of 2020, Black members of the academy were being bombarded with racist rhetoric associated with the Trump administration ( Madhani, 2021; McHendry, 2018) and regularly broadcasted body camera releases of state-sanctioned violence and death against Black bodies. Black parents were managing remote learning for their children and the cancellation of their children's summer programming due to COVID-19. The unavailability of 9-month faculty during summer months is well-known, and the request to do this equity work in spite of these challenges felt like the ultimate disrespect of time, space, and understanding to many Black academy members by White peers. These conditions, in some cases, widened the gap between Black students and colleagues within the university. For others, Black members buckled in and led the way. For most Black members, it was a time of ambivalence and haze.

I have laid out some of the main institutional challenges to antiracist work in the academy, but as I stated before, this is good and necessary work. No matter the challenges ahead, we should press forward. History has shown us that this work is very unsatisfying, until it isn't. By the time equity work feels satisfying, we may not even know or be able to connect its impetus with the final outcome. In CLAS, we organized our race and social justice work around six working groups. The working groups are central to this book and mentioned throughout. Here is a brief introduction to each working group.

### **The Structure and Function of the Six Race and Social Justice Working Groups**

The structure of the six working groups were conceived of by the College of Liberal Arts & Science's Justice and Equity Group (see chapter 2). This was a group of about 10 CLAS members who assembled in the summer of 2020 to

create the Race and Social Justice Initiative. They developed the framing for the following working groups:

1. *Anti-Racist Workplace* to ensure that the college work environment is supportive for faculty of all ranks, staff, and students;
2. *Graduate Recruitment and Success* to improve graduate recruitment and success of Black graduate students;
3. *Faculty Research and Outreach* to encourage, recognize, reward, and support service, research, grant work, creative projects, and public projects dedicated to racial and social justice;
4. *Policy Audit* to find ways to make the kinds of changes in our college that reflect our commitment to dismantling systems of oppression, racism, and structural violence by working at multiple levels simultaneously;
5. *Self-Reflection* to engage in college and department self-reflection and self-reflexivity; and
6. *Undergraduate Student Success* to improve graduate recruitment and success of Black undergraduate students.

My first task as the race and social justice advocate was to build these groups and provide them with guidance to accomplish their aims. I sent a call for volunteers through a college-wide email blast that shared our common goal: to eliminate racist practices from our administrative, instructional, and research worlds, with the goal of contributing to the creation of an equitable, just, and sustainable future. Our first priority is to dismantle anti-Black racism. Over 90 CLAS members answered the call within 1 week. Over the next 2 years, this number did not wane. As the working groups lost members due to sabbatical, reassignment, attrition, illness, or other commitments, other CLAS members stepped up with renewed interest. Each group was led by one leader who met with me and the other working group leaders about twice a semester as a group to discuss ideas, challenges, supports, and strategies. The working group leaders led a monthly meeting with their groups and met with me individually about twice a semester for content-specific guidance. I met with the CLAS faculty council each month to deliver a report of our efforts and advocate for institutional support; and I met with each working group as requested for consultation. With my leadership and the support of the CLAS dean's office, the working groups were able to accomplish their goals for the 2-year period.

## An Overview of This Book

This book is dedicated to capturing the good work done at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte College of Liberal Arts & Sciences toward race and social justice from 2021 to 2023. Two years is a very short time period to estimate the impact of a new antiracist initiative, but we have evidence-based work, recommendations, strategies, and action steps to share with the broader university community and academy. Here we show that a short time period, with expert leadership, support at all levels of the organization, and direction we have made CLAS a fairer and more equitable place to work and learn in the short and long term.

In chapter 2, Sonya Ramsey, Joyce Dalsheim, Debarati Dutta, and Julia Robinson Moore give insight into why the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences committed to tackling anti-Black racism. They connect the 2016 murder of Keith Lamont Scott in Charlotte, North Carolina, the 2020 murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Black Lives Matter movement, which led to the demand for institutional change at UNC Charlotte. In the summer of 2020, the CLAS Justice and Equity Group was formed. Led by the efforts of Sonya Ramsey, and determined that the college would not engage in “business as usual” and *laissez-faire* approaches, the CLAS Justice and Equity Group drew on decolonialized paradigms of higher education to develop an antiracist plan for the college, including the creation of the inaugural race and social justice advocate to implement the plan for long-term and sustainable change.

In chapter 3, Sandra Clinton, Maisha Cooper, and Dave Frantzreb lay out the foundations of antiracist work and provide detailed instruction on how this work is done. The authors describe the multilevel process of organizational change, which includes personal responsibility and accountability through self-reflection, dedicated and broad committee work, and creating and revising policy with an equity lens.

Eddy Souffrant and Susana Cisneros begin chapter 4 with a vignette that captures the perception of being under constant surveillance and the “disappearing” of people of color in the workplace as they navigate physical and mental space to avoid micro-aggressions. The authors demonstrate how overt and covert racism are practiced in the university setting and write on how to build an antiracist workplace through the practices of centering belonging, listening, needs assessment, data collection, faculty support, and examining policy.



In chapter 5, Crystal Eddins, Erika Denise Edwards, Scott Gartlan, and Honoré Misshoun tackle the importance of supporting faculty research and outreach with antiracist approaches and centering work that contributes to anti-Black racism. They begin with a historical account on how events such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) are connected to the University of North Carolina System. These historical events, and many others, led to the racial oppression of underrepresented Black faculty, students, and other members of color in the academy. These authors frame their four action ideas—encourage, recognize, reward, and support—and present short- and long-term goals to support faculty.

Alaina Names-Mattefs and Suzanne Leland use two fictional narratives to demonstrate the systematic advantages and disadvantages that students experience, largely based on racial differences. In chapter 6, they scrutinize the graduate school admissions process using equity lenses and discuss how Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were designed to support excluded and marginalized Black students. They demonstrate how we can learn from HBCUs to support the recruitment and retention at UNC Charlotte and other historically White colleges and universities.

In chapter 7, Victoria Rankin and Carrie Wells take a deep dive into incorporating race and social justice into pedagogy for undergraduate teaching. Centering Black students in higher education, the authors provide concrete recommendations related to reflexivity, conversations about race, meeting students where they are, developing students' capacity to understand and analyze racial issues, and being intentional about course preparation.

In the concluding chapter, I offer big-picture suggestions for what the college should do next. The initiation of the race and social justice initiative was just the beginning. What is the end?

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## The Genesis, Goals, and Process of UNC Charlotte's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' Justice and Equity Group

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### Messy Beginnings and Our Summer of Discontent

**O**ur goal in this chapter is to first present, as thickly and attentively as possible, a cogent history of the sociohistorical landscape that led to the creation of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' Justice and Equity Group and then map and discuss the shared vision that eventually led to the formation of the race and social justice advocate position. It is an ambitious task, fraught as it is with the fickleness of both individual and collective memory, BUT a critical one for recollection, archiving, and historical recovery must always be at the heart of any racial and social justice enterprise. Hence, we begin this introduction by first describing the violent and cataclysmic events of the immediate years leading up to the Black Lives Matter movement and its impact on individuals, including students, staff, faculty, and administrators, as well as programs and organizations on our campus.

## The Murder of Keith Lamont Scott and Its Impact on the UNC Charlotte Community

The fatal police shooting of Keith Lamont Scott an African American male, on September 20, 2016, had a tremendous impact on the city of Charlotte and the campus of UNC Charlotte (WCCB Charlotte, 2016). Occurring just a few miles from the campus, Scott's killing sparked multiple sites of civil protest and unrest across the UNC Charlotte campus and throughout the city. His murder made students and faculty come face to face with anti-Black violence and the long-standing legacies of police brutality against Black and Brown people. As students, faculty, and staff marched in protest in unprecedented demonstrations across campus, the city of Charlotte held larger protest marches and gatherings, some of which proved to be violent and destructive to the city and residential properties.

Amid the peaceful protest on campus and the violence of some marches across the city, Scott's killing had a revelatory impact on the campus of UNC Charlotte. His murder revealed a marked disparity between how faculty, students, and staff were able to address the historical legacies of slavery and its attendant manifestations of racial violence. Responses to Scott's murder revealed that despite numerous diversity- and equity-oriented initiatives that have occurred over the years at UNC Charlotte, students, faculty, and staff were unskilled in navigating issues of race and anti-Black violence. It also exposes how the legacies of systemic racism and the current racial inequality affecting American communities were left on the periphery of curricula, faculty education, and campus life in most colleges across campus, thus leaving faculty and students to figure out if and how to navigate it on their own.

In the days following Scott's killing, the absence of dialogue, support, and systemic response became increasingly apparent in the frustration expressed by many students, White and Non-White, toward faculty members who seemed unwilling or unable to offer in-class conversational spaces to discuss and confront the horrific tragedy that occurred so close to their classrooms. In turn, many faculty across UNC Charlotte's campus expressed their own uneasiness about attempting to address Scott's shooting or even engaging in race-conscious discussions; this was not because of an absence of care or concern, but because faculty felt ill equipped to step into those conversations with students.

It was evident that both students and faculty at Charlotte had a level of fear when it came to talking about race and racial violence. Regardless of racial or ethnic background, both groups were looking for institutional guidance and support because the current academic culture had omitted substantive conversations about race and anti-Black violence at the extremities of academic knowledge.

### **A Summer of Violence: Losing George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery to Ongoing Police Brutality**

It only took 8 minutes and 46 seconds to end George Floyd's life on May 25, 2020 (Stein, 2022). Long enough for Black people to remember Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. Long enough to recall the growing list of African Americans who died in police custody over the last decade. Even longer for people of color to remember the many other African American women and transgender humans who died at the hands of police such as Tanisha Anderson, Yvette Smith, Rekia Boyd, Natasha McKenna, Sandra Bland, Kindra Chapman, Kimberlee Randle-King, Joyce Curnell, Ralkina Jones, Kayla Moore, Gynnya McMillen, and Korryn Gaines.

The successive reoccurrence of such horrific events has served to reawaken historical wounds of anti-Black terrorism and racial trauma for African Americans. The cumulative impact of daily micro-aggressions of White hegemony and the assaults of racial violence—from slavery to sharecropping, from convict labor to mass incarceration, from lynchings to massacres of entire Black towns, from segregation to Black disenfranchisement—reminds us that Black folk have been in a continuous battle for humanity and equality for centuries (Higginbotham, 2020).

The racialized organizational structures that were embedded in state-sanctioned violence across America in the 20th century persist to this day. The police brutality we see today is a by-product of America's historic proclivity to erase Black suffering and avoid the work needed to heal the racial traumas of its non-White citizens. For a deeper discussion, please refer to Robinson Moore and Sullivan's "Rituals of White Privilege: Keith Lamont Scott and the Erasure of Black Suffering," (2018) where the authors explore the police shooting of Keith Lamont Scott in the city of Charlotte.

George Floyd's death has caused many people to demand new laws that reform American policing tactics. However, laws must be backed by genuine

conversations between police and the communities they serve. Floyd's death exposes the unhealed wounds of America's racial past, and until entire communities—non-White and White people—discuss this past, reform measures will not be enough to keep Black people alive. The salient chant of Black Lives Matter protestors' call for strategies for justice, healing, and societal reform that destructure pejorative myths and disrupt rituals of anti-Black violence is crucial to understand, hear, and heed if true racial peace is to be achieved in America.

### UNC Charlotte Responds to George Floyd's Murder With Reaction Statements

George Floyd's murder had an unprecedented impact on our campus. Many programs and departments organized working groups and ad hoc committees to draft support and reaction statements condemning the ongoing and systemic violence against Black communities in the United States. Debarati Dutta, one of the co-authors of this chapter and a senior lecturer in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric and Digital Studies (WRDS) at UNC Charlotte, served on her department's summer working group to draft one such antiracist statement. From the very beginning, it was clear that a tangible and actionable plan was needed, not another reaction statement that could not be operationalized. This working group grappled with the discipline of writing studies' White origins and the unquestioned privileging of Euro-American epistemologies in the discipline.

The WRDS ad hoc committee wondered: *How do we decenter White epistemologies in our department and the discipline of writing studies, and how can our antiracist action plan get us there?* In retrospect, it becomes even more apparent that each working group member instinctively knew that reaction statements could easily become a call to not react, to not do anything, and let the statement become a discursive performance designed to soothe but not really support or enable those whose minds and bodies continue to be victims of curricular and other kinds of violence in academic institutions. In this sense, response statements become perfect examples of performative allyship in institutional spaces, a promise of nothing. At the same time, an action plan and statement offer pathways and directives to act, do something, and be held accountable.

## Formation of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' Justice and Equity Group

Amid the rising crescendo for substantive and systemic change across the nation, the (now retired) dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS), Nancy Gutierrez, formed a justice and equity group. This working group, composed of staff, interdisciplinary faculty, and administrators from across the college, included the following members:

- Jason Black, professor, Communication Studies
- Maisha Cooper, assistant professor, Criminal Justice and Criminology
- Joyce Dalsheim, professor, Global Studies
- Debarati Dutta, senior lecturer, Writing, Rhetoric and Digital Studies
- Alicia Gumbs Hodge, university program specialist/human resources, CLAS
- Nancy Gutierrez, dean, CLAS
- Richard Leeman, senior associate dean, CLAS
- Pinku Mukherjee, associate dean for research and graduate education, CLAS
- Sonya Ramsey, professor, History/director, Women's & Gender Studies
- Julia Robinson Moore, associate professor, Religious Studies

The values and imperative were clear from the very beginning: our working group needed to clear the ground for deep change to happen within the college and to weave justice and equity work through all aspects of our institutional lives.

## Rationale for Deep Change

### Reshaping Institutional Life

As mentioned previously, in the summer of 2020, tens of thousands of people took to the streets to once again demand an end to racial injustice and brutality and ask for fundamental, structural changes in our institutions. Their actions captured the attention of people around the globe, including those in positions of power, thereby creating an opening for change. Because structural racism is institutionalized, we know that if we continue doing what we've

always done, the results will be the same: the outcome will be more structural racism. The university as we know it in this part of the world is one such institution. Its history in the United States is rooted in colonialism, White hegemony, and the continuous subjugation and control of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. Recognizing that we cannot bring about justice and equity at the university without real structural changes in the broader society, the working group was nonetheless committed to finding ways to make the kinds of changes in our college that reflect our commitment to dismantling systems of oppression, racism, and structural violence by working at multiple levels simultaneously to *institute a model of care*. The urgent imperative to re-think our everyday practices led us to think beyond simple additive measures. We realized the futility of adding one more program, one more scholarship, and one more workshop. Instead, we concentrated on *the values that underlie our idea of what a university should be* and making decisions, large and small, based on those values. We had two driving priorities:

1. Taking our cue from local and national activists in the Movement for Black Lives, our first priority is dismantling *anti-Black racism*. Expanding on this priority, the CLAS Justice and Equity Group aimed to identify and break down barriers to the full participation of historically underrepresented people/Black people/people of color/Indigenous peoples/intersectional people/differently abled people/international scholars and students/religious minorities/exploited people in our college, the university, and broader community.
2. Bring about increased awareness of the *multiple worlds of human knowledge and experience*.

Our work began by identifying where race and social injustice continue to persist within our institutions and how to address them with care, wisdom, and continuity. History had taught us that discrete, additive measures and band-aid solutions seldom enact deep and transformative change.

### (NOT) Business as Usual

In order to address specific problems, we have tended to rely on methods that hold narrowly delimited problems in isolation. But attending to a specific problem without attending to the broader environment in which this takes place is not sufficient to address the problems we face.

Remaining with the method of “isolation” has the potential to reproduce existing structures of hierarchy and oppression that generated the problems in the first place. The method of isolating a single problem emerges from a particularly powerful form of knowledge production that has become naturalized in our institutions and our everyday lives. This method of thinking permeates much of our research, teaching, and policy making. But it is only *one among many* ways of knowing and being in the world. Rather than limiting the contexts of problem solving, we advocate learning from other available knowledges. Doing so requires a shift in our understanding of what counts as knowledge in the first place.

Taken together, the isolation of discrete “problems” emphasizes practices like counting people, tracking grades and graduation rates, while also rewarding people for doing more—working longer hours, producing more, publishing more, getting more grants, doing more service, creating another program—or for doing “better” than their colleagues. It thereby values competition over cooperation and individualization over the community. This way of thinking and the practices it encourages reflect the values of neoliberal capitalism, which has developed in the United States and beyond, with racism at its core. Relying on these ways of thinking and acting will not dismantle structural racism because they lie at its foundation. *We must instead initiate a change in structure, culture, and affect that values the well-being of students, faculty, staff, and members of our broader community and environment.*

## Doing Things Otherwise

Given the general sense of insecurity (e.g., financial, health, jobs, housing) and our overburdened lives that require one more workshop, one more training session, or one more set of classroom surveys, we **MUST** collectively resist—because we will be asked again—the request to do more for less. Some people may feel accused as if structural racism and inequity, in general, were the fault of particular individuals. Such solutions seem to blame individuals for structural problems. Productive introspection *may* improve certain interpersonal relationships and is essential to ridding the institution of its racist practices because institutionalized practices are maintained by the actions of individuals. But approaches that rely solely and mostly, for example, on individual introspection or meeting numerical “diversity targets” in recruitment are *insufficient* to change the existing model that reproduces racism itself in its multiple iterations.



Hence all efforts at the college must be broader movements that seek to dismantle the systems that made the brutality of enslavement and forced displacement possible (along with forced displacement and genocide directed at Indigenous peoples). This work involves transforming social relations and re-envisioning and reconstructing our institution as part of rebuilding a world that is not based on human and ecological exploitation but on relationships of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual support, both among people and between people and the planet.

### **Model of Care, Community, and Collaboration**

A model of care might suggest that we slow things down and allow more time for thinking. For example, we could decide to set aside time for members of the college and broader community to think and learn together, to build an intellectual community by studying the history of capitalism, colonialism, and race and their relationship to the climate crisis. Efforts such as this should be highly valued by our college. Studying together in this way should not come in addition to all our other work. Instead, it should replace some of our bureaucratic busyness and/or should be valued as part of teaching and/or research.

### **Tools for Diversity and the Great Survey Debate**

Drawing on our ideas of what is involved in moving beyond the status quo, this group emphasized the necessity of enacting practices and measures to mobilize positive goals and assurances to support diversity. After reviewing the dean's original CLAS administrative diversity initiatives that included establishing a working group, we were then charged with developing plans and practices that would result in measurable change and accountability. But how should we proceed? Conventional (read Western/Eurocentric) academic wisdom is to be followed, then we might seek to "measure" change by first mapping and quantifying the problem we are setting out to solve.

Our working group, comprised of scholars and staff from diverse disciplines and units from biology to religious studies, engaged in a vigorous discussion where members voiced their frustrations and concerns relating to the one tool that serves as the core measuring instrument with diversity circles: the written survey. When a natural scientist in the group first proposed conducting such a study, some of the humanities scholars dissented. "Not another survey!"

Some members expressed survey fatigue and wariness. Others wondered: What can another survey teach us that we do not already know?

The problem with creating equity surveys include:

1. We ALREADY KNOW the issues—Surveys often identify problems or points to address. Several members have worked on diversity-related issues and participated in these surveys for several years, and we remained cognizant of these issues and wanted to act.
2. We want to do MORE than a survey—Other members feared that the time-consuming process involved in designing, implementing, and evaluating a survey could take valuable time that could be better used to develop practices and policies. It would become a familiar way to stall progress and not attend to what needs to be done.
3. The FRUSTRATION factor—Committee members shared their disillusionment and disappointment after a repeated lack of action to address concerns or enact change to remedy issues cited in the survey results. Employee Engagement Consulting Platform confirmed that some people’s failure to respond to surveys was due to a lack-of-action fatigue, not the frequency rate of surveys (Elzinga, 2022).
4. Just ANOTHER form of colonization—One member objected to the general process of collecting survey data on students. The justification was that we needed to know more in order to arrive at “best practices” for reducing racism. This well-known process of always first “gathering data” has the potential to undermine the very goals we set for ourselves. Decolonizing the university does not require recording more data about students. Indeed, doing so might be better understood as another form of colonization. Referring to the groundbreaking work of Columbia University Cultural Studies Professor Edward Said’s thought-provoking 1978 treatise *Orientalism* on Western attitudes toward the “Orient,” this working group member compared an aspect of Said’s description of “Orientalism,” which involved collecting narrowly defined kinds of information about people, constituting intellectual, political, and administrative categories from those partial data, and therefore bringing those classifications alive as new aspects of reality to symbolize the inherent problems with the modern-day practice and use of survey implementation (Said, 1978).

5. Let's NOT reinvent the wheel—Whereas a few members still countered with substantive arguments for the necessity of securing data, the committee came to the consensus that it needed to do more. In addition, some members referred to the prevalence of diversity surveys from previous years, the university's use of an independent assessment agency to collect data from students related to diversity, and the UNC System's similar surveys. Instead of creating and administering another survey, we needed to dig deeper and broader to see where clean data already existed and to use that data to move forward.

## The Nuts and Bolts of Diversity

### What Would Bertha Maxwell-Roddey Do?

Now that the committee had settled on alternative action, what would it be? Sonya Ramsey elaborates:

As a historian who wrote a biography of UNC Charlotte's first Black administrator, Bertha Maxwell-Roddey, the founding director of the University's Black Studies, now Africana Studies department, I drew from her mandate to establish ongoing initiatives and institutions that promoted and sustained diversity. (Ramsey, 2022)

On one warm morning in July, Ramsey began envisioning what measures the committee could enact or issues they could resolve to establish a thriving desegregated university if we had funding and support. As Ramsey started to type, she pushed back familiar feelings of disillusionment from working with diversity-related groups in several university settings, all of whom benignly engaged in an "either/or" or "what about me" version of diversity that unknowingly erased the historical background of measures to address systemic racial and gender inequities and inadvertently encouraged separations and competition instead of cooperation.

By deemphasizing the central role of race over the years, a new model of diversity has emerged that promotes performative inclusion but diminishes the call to dismantle systemic inequalities. For example, different members of minoritized groups and women often felt forced to compete against each other to secure the "one" diversity resource. Why not work on challenging

these inherently discriminatory and biased perceptions surrounding limitations and work together to expand opportunities for all?

Ramsey hoped this group could endorse an “and” or “altogether” focus, cognizant of the central role of race and the vital importance of dismantling White supremacy, which impacts other forms of discrimination and inequities. For example, if UNC Charlotte’s CLAS worked to eliminate implicit racial biases with its faculty promotion and retention policies, such as not actively requesting qualified professors for historically Black universities to provide external letters for faculty in promotion cases when appropriate, those measures would also serve as models to eliminate other forms of discrimination from sexism to homophobia and ableism. Over the years, as diversity, equity, and inclusion turned from eliminating inequities to providing more opportunities for diverse interactions, the core issue of racial injustice became diminished or erased. As a result, some diversity programs became more focused on measuring how many people of this group or that group were enrolled rather than striving for substantive institutional change. Ramsey wanted to go beyond, as the inaugural UNC Charlotte Chief Diversity Officer Brandon L. Wolfe suggests, “food and festivals.” She even wanted to go beyond surveys and statements (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

### **Turning Points Into Praxis**

By the time Sonya Ramsey finished, she had listed over 28 action points that addressed:

- nontenure- and tenure-track faculty and promotion concerns,
- work culture and environment issues, and
- matters related to student success.

Ramsey’s work was both pragmatic and aspirational. As a humanities professor at a public university with limited resources, she had been intentional about listing action items that could easily be met with little or no financial support. She had also included aspiration points. Some of those points involved providing wellness/writing retreats for faculty and hiring an ombudsman, which happened! (To read Ramsey’s proposal, please see the appendix at the end of this book.)

Ramsey’s work became the foundation for our move to tangible action, providing us with a clear map of what we needed to do to move beyond

surveys and action statements. After submitting the list of action points to the committee, Ramsey apprehensively awaited their reaction. She recalls,

After working at a state institution that has weathered the storms of recession, budget cuts, and now multiple pandemics, I braced to get the typical “we don’t have funding for that” response. Instead, to my astonishment, the dean and the rest of the committee embraced these points and worked to transform these ideas into praxis.

Using the points as a base, Dean Gutierrez directed the committee to create faculty-led working groups relating to the broader themes of the points and some of the dean’s earlier suggestions.

Drawing on our research interests as faculty, Debarati Dutta, Julia Robinson Moore, and Sonya Ramsey worked on finalizing the objectives of the working groups; Joyce Dalsheim wrote the group’s rationale (outlined in the previous section, “Rationale for Deep Change”); and Maisha Cooper volunteered to organize and present our findings to the faculty council. Other committee members on staff and in administration, including Alicia Gumbs Hodge, Jason Black, Richard Leeman, and Pinku Mukherjee, interviewed department chairs to garner their input and performed a careful audit of existing CLAS student, faculty, and staff policies and procedures to identify and eliminate explicit or implicit biases or discrimination. As the nation reeled from a summer of multiple pandemics of COVID-19, economic uncertainty, and racial unrest, the committee wanted these working groups to meet to identify concerns and suggest best practices for dismantling systemic racism and confronting anti-Blackness embedded within university policies and initiatives. We planned to reward faculty and staff who worked in the trenches to support students affected by discrimination. We also wanted to spark new research trajectories by rewarding faculty engaged in racial and social justice–related research projects.

Unfortunately, while campuses are centers for knowledge production in diverse forms, even academics can reflect the prejudicial attitudes of the larger society or become anxious when tasked to discuss uncomfortable topics with their students. The committee planned to remedy these issues by addressing all potential reactions to the points, including “we don’t know how to do it,” “it’s an unfair burden to make me support diversity efforts,” “I have research to do!” and “I wasn’t trained for this work.” When professors first expressed

anxiety about the campus practices after the nearby tragic murder of Keith Lamont Scott, the university lacked the emphasis to address these issues long-term. As the nation encountered another tragic incident of state-sponsored racial violence, we had another opportunity to develop training and best practices to ensure that professors have the tools to support their students and one another. As the working groups work on revising promotion policies to encourage and support social justice–related service or teaching, these efforts may not contribute to a faculty member’s research portfolios. However, this work could ensure the sustained mental health of their students and peers, thus furthering the university’s contribution to the greater good.

As the working group committee met during the summer, which is often when faculty devote their time to research, it did so because it understood the need to sacrifice. Other faculty members in other CLAS departments, including some from Ramsey’s own history department, were also engaged in other racial justice work, including establishing a scholarship. Her history department colleague and friend even suggested to the dean that this working group committee should receive some financial support for working during the summer. Making our labor visible, asking for compensation, active listening, and participatory work enabled the group to put our model of care into actual practice.

## **Practice Collective Support and Sharing**

In addition to receiving support and encouragement from other CLAS departments and programs, one major underlying factor that propelled the working group to sacrifice their summer was then CLAS Dean Nancy Gutierrez. Dean Gutierrez’s active and authentic engagement throughout the process, her commitment to participatory and democratic processes, and her genuine regard for staff and faculty voices amplified our individual commitments to this work. She participated in all our meetings and led by example. It made us realize that until there is a clear mandate from an authentic commitment to implement diversity initiatives from top administrative leaders, even the most substantively designed diversity initiatives will falter. Compassionate and democratic leadership, authentic endorsements, and financial support are key to supporting and sustaining racial and social justice, equity, and inclusion efforts.

## Creating a CLAS Race and Social Justice Advocate Role

As the end of the summer soon approached, the committee could reflect on its accomplishments as it had developed the prototype or outline for the working groups and even designated short- and long-term objectives for each group. If they wanted to, working group members could also continue participating in these working groups. However, the group's next task involved envisioning a leader who would facilitate race and social justice efforts and serve as a liaison between CLAS and the university at large. The CLAS race and social justice advocate would not serve in the role of chief diversity officer but serve as a manager and information resource to the members of the working groups and interact with university diversity committees on behalf of CLAS. Fortunately, UNC Charlotte appointed Sharon Waites Spellman as an interim chief diversity officer. In September 2021, Chancellor Sharon Gaber appointed Brandon L. Wolfe as associate vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion and chief diversity officer. As the Fall 2020 semester started, Sonya Ramsey, now the director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program, headed the search committee for the race and social justice advocate. After a successful search, the committee announced that Kendra Jason, associate professor of sociology, had accepted the position and would start in January 2021.

Although it was exciting to see the early formation of the working groups and Jason's eagerness to start, it was also bittersweet for Ramsey as she stepped back from the committee to go on a much-needed research sabbatical for the Spring semester. She explains,

As I reflect upon this enriching experience, I cherish the opportunity to work with such a diverse and dedicated group of colleagues and administrators. Reflecting upon UNC Charlotte founder Bonnie Cone's vision to transform a night school for veterans into a university, I envision how she valued working with faculty and administrators to build a "new" university, one that would begin its inception as a legally desegregated university. Building on that platform of innovation, Maxwell-Roddey worked to turn this promise of desegregation into a tangible reality at UNC Charlotte. (Ramsey, 2022)

The dedicated work of the committee, race and social justice advocate, Kendra Jason, and the working groups' efforts to enact change draws from their legacies of transformation and inclusivity as we continue to build a "new" university or, as our school new promotional materials state, "Shape What's Next!"

## Acknowledgments

This committee extends its heartfelt gratitude to former CLAS Dean Nancy Gutierrez for establishing this original Justice and Equity Group. We also want to thank the contributors to this chapter, Sonya Ramsey, Joyce Dalsheim, Debarati Dutta, and Julia Robinson Moore. In addition, we want to recognize the commitment and dedication of the remaining members of the Justice and Equity Group for their continued participation in other diversity-related efforts. While this chapter tells the story of the origins, we remain in debt to all the faculty and administrators currently participating in working groups. Lastly, we would be remiss in not expressing our appreciation for CLAS Race and Social Justice Advocate Kendra Jason for her tireless efforts to implement the goals of this committee to create sustainable change. Our community and worlds are better because of each one of you! We thank you!

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## Equity Fundamentals

### Self-Reflection, Committee Work, and Policy

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**T**here are three fundamental approaches you should build into all your antiracist initiatives: self-reflection, committee work, and policy review. As with any college-level institutional change, these recommendations are multilevel: personal, department level, and college level. In this chapter, we first detail the centrality of each approach in equity work, provide descriptions of the working groups charged with leading the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) under each area, and discuss challenges and recommendations for each. We begin with Maisha Cooper, the lead of the self-reflection working group. Next, Sandra Clinton details the work of the Department Liaisons for Equity and Inclusion (DLEI) Committee. This committee has one representative from each of the 21 departments and programs that make up CLAS. As the committee name suggests, these faculty and staff members work as liaisons between their department or program and the college as a whole. Finally, Dave Frantzreb details how to read, revise, and build policy with an equity lens.

## Getting Started: Self-Reflection

*Maisha Cooper*

The Self-Reflection Working Group had the goal of developing ideas and strategies that would engage the college and its members in self-reflection and self-reflexivity, with the overarching goal being to promote and sustain antiracist thought, policy, and practice at both the college and departmental levels. As a collective, our first objective was to have a working definition of what self-reflection was and, even more importantly, what it was not. The concepts of self-reflection and self-reflexivity seemed straightforward: the process of seriously considering our own social positions, morals, motives, and, at its core, our own humanity. However, we soon realized that “awareness and self-reflection of our own social positions is important, but it must be understood within the broader context of race and power [and the need for transition from self to institution]” (Kishimoto, 2018, p. 542). This meant that we (the working group, college administrators, faculty, staff, and students) needed to engage in the type of reflection that asks the deeper questions, such as how knowledge is generated and how power relations operate at the various levels (D’Cruz et al., 2007); what information about Black folks and other marginalized groups is being disseminated, ingested, and embedded within our classrooms/workspaces and beyond; and what are we actually willing to do in order to promote or sustain an equitable environment and flourishing culture for all.

### The Work

We understood that this work has to be continual at both the individual and institutional levels and that our role was to brainstorm ideas and strategies that our college and various departments could then use to further equity work. We also understood the need to underscore that self-reflection and reflexivity was not a practice of pointing the blame, creating a sense of self-hatred among majority group members, nor was it something that could be implemented once and then considered “accomplished” and forgotten. With these things in mind, we then began the work of identifying resources, generating ideas, and identifying a few goals. For the purposes of our group, we defined

self-reflection and reflexivity as the process of evaluating policy, practice, and pedagogy at the college and departmental levels as it relates to race and social justice, diversity, equity, equality, and inclusion for staff, students, and faculty. Throughout the course of our first semester meetings, we developed four initial goals and began carving out one deliverable project designed to be carried out on an annual basis. Our four goals were as follows:

1. Develop a short visual presentation that highlights resources available to departments and post it on the college website and send it directly to department chairs.
2. Develop a visual presentation that identifies and defines key terms in this work (i.e., what is meant by antiracism, anti-Blackness, diversity, etc.) to be shared in departmental settings and classrooms.
3. Identify groups or individuals who could come into the college or departments and hold equity workshops, be guest speakers, and evaluate the racial climates.
4. Create public acknowledgment or recognition for departments that are doing equity work.

With these four goals in mind, we knew we first needed to introduce college members to self-reflection as a personal accountability and learning process. We decided to hold a college-wide Self-Reflection Symposium. The symposium was designed to be a 1-day workshop that would consist of three separate tracts: (1) students, (2) staff and (3) faculty. The workshop sessions would be led by race and social justice experts who specialized in academic culture with talks and lessons specifically geared toward each group. The symposium would also include sessions on cultural awareness that would offer insight into the various student organizations on campus for marginalized members.

## Challenges

As with any other work, though we have been able to accomplish some great things and maintain forward movement, there were challenges. As we dug deeper into the literature and the realities of marginalized groups, some working group members found themselves overwhelmed, angry, frustrated, and sad. It should be noted that I was the only self-identified Black member of the

committee and most working group members were new to direct anti-Black racism equity work.

At times, the weight of the work, coupled with the weight of a pandemic, seemed unbearable. It was at these moments that we had to have a rallying of sorts to remind and reencourage ourselves. This “rallying” included members providing testimonies of change within the various departments, the college, and the university, as well as personal victories and transformative revelations. Additionally, over the term of the working group, we lost working group members as they reported fatigue, taxing service requirements, and the stress of the pandemic. However, we gained new members each semester, which helped sustain the momentum.

Other challenges that our working group faced included figuring out how to navigate the many different ideas coming from many well-intentioned folks, how to hone in on our objectives for the symposium, and how not to rely heavily on the labor of our Black and other colleagues of color. As the working group leader and a junior faculty member, I had to learn how to trust the other members to accomplish tasks instead of attempting to do most of the work alone. Nonetheless, eventually, all of us came to understand that “team work really does make the dream work” and that the practices and process of promoting self-reflection must remain consistent at every level and within every community (i.e., faculty, staff, and student).

## How Self-Reflection Made Our Group Successful

In reflecting on the group’s gains and challenges, I am reminded of how it was self-reflection that ultimately made our team work. From the onset and throughout the duration of our working group, each of us had to engage in critical self-reflection. It was crucial to our success that we each understood our respective points of privilege and social locations. We had to dive into our own beliefs, dissect our own misconceptions and definitions of racial and social justice, and discover how our individual realities impacted our relationships and interactions with others, and what, if any, role we each played in sustaining anti-Black sentiments and systemic racism in order to experience personal and professional growth. I believe that it was the consistent practice of self-reflection that empowered our group to achieve our goals, in spite of our challenges, and that allowed us to hold one another accountable in this work. Each working group member was committed to the work of self-reflection and

the importance of doing so while striving to deconstruct anti-Black racism, inequity, and inequality within the college, our respective departments, and our communities. Our ability to produce tangible products and goals would not have been possible without us first having done self-reflection ourselves.

## **The Department Liaisons for Equity and Inclusion Committee**

*Sandra Clinton*

### **Foundation and Organization**

The Department Liaisons for Equity and Inclusion (DLEI) Committee is currently composed of 21 faculty who represent the departments of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) on issues related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. The DLEI Committee was initially founded in 2010 by (now retired) Dean Nancy Gutierrez as part of the CLAS Diversity Program. Our mission is to enhance the work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice at both the college and department levels. Each liaison serves as a point of contact between their department and the college. This relationship allows the committee to work collectively on important issues that create an inclusive environment across all departments while improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) matters that are unique to individual departments. While the liaison is an advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice in their own department, this successful model acknowledges that additional faculty both within and across departments are needed to support these important issues. While the liaison functions as a champion on the department level, this role also builds a network of support around those people. It should be clear that the liaison is not responsible for enforcing policy related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice.

### **The Work of the DLEI Committee**

The success of the DLEI Committee is grounded in the bidirectional communication between the liaison's department and the college. Liaisons share the ideas, policies, and initiatives of their department with the DLEI Committee, which builds community among those interested in diversity, equity, and inclusion work. The DLEI Committee collectively advocates across all

departments for policies related to race and social justice issues, identifies inconsistencies in departments, and works to identify best practices that can be used across departments. For example, as a group, the committee makes recommendations at the college level on the mandatory role of training around diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice and how often they should be required. Additionally, the DLEI Committee provides feedback to the college on specific activities being implemented at the college and university levels. This bidirectional relationship is further strengthened by the positive partnership between the DLEI Committee and the race and social justice advocate, which allows information and best practices to be summarized across departments and shared both across and outside the college at the university level.

### **Best Practices**

We have identified several best practices to support the DLEI Committee, department and college that reflect the bidirectional communication strategy that is important for success. At the department level it is important for the DLEI Committee member to communicate regularly. This communication takes the form of summarizing DLEI Committee work at faculty meetings in either oral or written format. We recommend that the DLEI Committee member create a written report at least once an academic year to document the activities of the department and the college committee. If the individual department has a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee, it is critical that the DLEI Committee member be a standing member of this committee to coordinate and communicate activities from the college level to the department and vice versa. While it is possible for the member to be the chair of this committee, it is also recommended that someone else in the department serve in this capacity. By having another faculty member lead the department DEI committee, you create a community of shared responsibility and workload across department faculty.

The DLEI Committee member should also meet with the department chair at least once a semester to keep them updated on college activities. As the most significant change is going to arise from the faculty at the department level, it is important for the department DEI committee, the DLEI Committee representative, and the department chair to be in communication and agreement of activities to promote in the department. While the appointment length for the DLEI Committee member is unique for each department, it is

recommended that this position is rotated among faculty at some regular frequency (e.g., every 3 years) to not only prevent burnout of the representative but also bring in new ideas to the overall DLEI Committee.

Since its inception the DLEI Committee has been successful in advocating for and promoting multiple initiatives such as diversity in student evaluations, identifying challenges faced by international faculty, tracking and documenting best practices across departments, and conducting climate surveys. The DLEI Committee is an important voice in reviewing workplace policies and promotion guidelines that results not only in making sure equity work is valued at the university but also in creating and maintaining inclusive environments.

## Developing an Eye for Equity in Policy

*Dave Frantzreb*

In the wake of a global pandemic and a rise in racial and ethnic injustices, I, like many of my colleagues, wanted to make meaningful changes in our personal and professional lives. In late January 2021, one opportunity presented itself as a call to action to join the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' (CLAS) Policy Audit (PA) Working Group. Our charge was to make changes in college-level policies that aligned with our updated mission and strategic plan to promote inclusion, ensure equitable practices and procedures, and promote social justice for faculty. I do want to point out that there are students and administrative staff in the college, but their policies and procedures for employment are managed through Human Resources and are beyond the scope of the PA Working Group. The team comprised senior leadership by Richard Leeman (CLAS dean's office), myself as a part-time lecturer and former CLAS staff employee, and six tenured and tenure-track faculty members. We were lucky to have a dedicated note taker, and on behalf of the team we send a thank-you to Susan Bunton for all her hard work and eye for details keeping us so organized.

From the beginning we knew from personal experience and research that having a more diverse and representative staff fosters engagement and organizational growth while promoting equity and retention (Marginson, 2016). However, there were no clear roadmaps or specific guidelines on how to begin the process of redefining and incorporating new policies in higher education



<h2>1. Research and Creative Activity</h2> <p>Research and Creative Activity are assessed, both in terms of productivity and of impact. Departments should provide guidance to their faculty, regarding how these two aspects should be weighted. Impact can be demonstrated in a number of ways, for example, peer-reviewed publications, juried exhibitions, patents, software, digital resources including internet-delivered projects, performances, presentations of scholarly papers, plenary addresses, community-engaged scholarship, research awards, and successful grantsmanship, as defined by the department (this is not an inclusive list). The Department should also look for evidence that the work is of high quality and supports the department, college, and university mission. <u>That mission includes advancing the values of equity and inclusion and promoting racial and social justice. Research or Creative Activity that contributes to the advancement of knowledge concerning issues facing diverse populations, that designs programs to support researchers from historically underrepresented groups, that initiates or performs innovative scholarship that advances the understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion in a respective field of study, or that has the potential to improve the quality of life for historically underrepresented groups is considered a valuable contribution to the mission of the College.</u></p>	<p><b>Author</b> Adding DEI language here: "Contributing to the advancement of knowledge concerning issues facing diverse populations or that of concern to or designing programs to support researchers from historically underrepresented groups that support DEI in research or creative work. Other examples include initiating and performing groundbreaking research that advances understanding of DEI in a respective field of study or has potential to improve quality of life for targeted populations. Research engagement that enhances understanding DEI and improves access and opportunity is considered as a valuable contribution." - <a href="https://www.smc.edu/odi/ODI-Initiatives/The-Pillars/EXAMPLES-OF-DIVERSITY-EQUITY-and-INCLUSION-DEI-INITIATIVES-AND-STRATEGIES-003.pdf">https://www.smc.edu/odi/ODI-Initiatives/The-Pillars/EXAMPLES-OF-DIVERSITY-EQUITY-and-INCLUSION-DEI-INITIATIVES-AND-STRATEGIES-003.pdf</a></p>
<h2>2. Teaching</h2> <p>Teaching is evaluated as it relates to classroom teaching, direction of theses and dissertations, academic advisement, and extension programs. The following areas can be assessed, as appropriate:</p>	<p><b>Author</b> If the College mission is written so that it specifies the promotion of racial and social justice, will that be sufficient to allow such scholarship to be recognized?</p>

Figure 1. Expanded Definitions

(Harvey & Kosman, 2014; Salmi & D'Addio, 2021). Early in the work the team recognized that they were subject matter experts (having experienced the process) and committed to biweekly meetings. Between the meetings, the teams reviewed historical data on tenure and promotion and prior institutional research to gain context and review barriers in the duties, promotions, and reappointment procedures. In the beginning, we reviewed shorter policies focusing on definitions and expectations (i.e., Workload Policy), then divided into subcommittees focusing on smaller sections within the Faculty Evaluation Handbook. While it seemed overwhelming at first, each subcommittee worked in shared Google documents to focus on attuning the language and definitions while removing any exclusive practices or barriers that impacted historically marginalized faculty or instructors.

In Figure 1, you can see an example of how the subcommittees were able to define the college's mission to include "advancing the values of equity and inclusion and promoting race and social justice," allowing us to expand how we evaluate and value different teaching strategies and pedagogies across the largest college at the university. For example, we knew that student teaching evaluations have historically negatively impacted women, international, and non-White faculty (Adams et al., 2022; Butler, 1999; Valencia, 2019), but they remained the primary evidence for effective teaching in the college classroom. Figure 2 highlights the expansion of activities and types of evidence instructors could use when demonstrating different types of student mentorship or teaching strategies that promote diversity and civic engagement within the

<h2>2. Teaching</h2> <p>Teaching is evaluated as it relates to classroom teaching, direction of theses and dissertations, academic advisement, and extension programs. The following areas can be assessed, as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of competence and currency in subject matter, of proper organization and design of courses taught, of ability to <a href="#">teach students from diverse backgrounds effectively, and of ability to</a> present the subject matter in an interesting and clear manner that is appropriate for students at the level for which that course is designed;</li> <li><a href="#">evidence of integrating diversity, equity or inclusion content into course subject matter</a>;</li> <li>effective direction of student research;</li> <li>expertise in development of curriculum;</li> <li><a href="#">evidence of effective mentoring of students from diverse backgrounds</a>;</li> <li>evidence of effective advising of students from diverse backgrounds;</li> <li>evidence of efforts and accomplishments in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, promoting the civic good and the goals of racial and social justice, through teaching work such as course content, curriculum development, and mentoring.</li> <li>Evidence that teaching contributions are effective in light of the Department's teaching mission.</li> <li><a href="#">Procedures/Protocols for reporting inequity based on race/gender in the department in terms of annual teaching evaluations?</a></li> </ul> <p>Teaching effectiveness can be evaluated, using the following evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>course evaluations;</li> <li>peer evaluation;</li> <li>construction of syllabi, assignments, classroom activities, etc.;</li> <li><a href="#">students mentored or supervised, and the product(s) of those students' work</a></li> <li>pedagogical innovation.</li> </ul> <p>Departments are cautioned to use course evaluations as demonstrating only one particular aspect of a faculty member's teaching effectiveness, and not to rely solely on these numbers to assess a faculty member's effectiveness. Departments should develop a protocol for monitoring and reporting course evaluation inequities based on race and/or gender.</p>	<p><b>A Author</b> We could also possibly put language here about inequities in teaching evaluations with regard to women and minorities encouraging the DRC and evaluators to beware of these issues.</p> <p><b>A Author</b> This is included in later bullet (evidence of efforts ...). Delete?</p> <p><b>A Author</b> A statement about this might be added to the paragraph below starting "Departments are cautioned..."</p> <p><b>A Author</b> It was added to the last paragraph.</p>
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Figure 2. Teaching Evaluations Expanded

classroom. These types of teaching development were added to highlight the activities and services that tend to fall on junior faculty, women, and other marginalized faculty and have been historically left out of job duties and evaluation procedures (Adams et al., 2022).

By the end of the year, the team had created a process that delivered a fully revised set of policies and procedures that championed diversity, social justice, and inclusion through faculty development, civic engagement and research, and student-focused teaching pedagogies. For those looking to make similar improvements in their units, we suggest the following key practices to making meaningful changes.

### Build a Team of Experts

For the purpose of a faculty policy review, your experts should vary across their knowledge, in that having only senior leadership may inadvertently miss barriers impacting newer faculty and staff, part-time instructors, or those shifting between ranks. In our policy review, the college's internal policies only

focused on faculty and lecturers with all other staffing policies governed by Human Resource. However, we also recommend that you have subject matter experts in race and social justice on the team, but don't rely solely on them for all things related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Each team member should be responsible for researching and understanding the need for systemic change.

## Resources

First, you need to ensure that your policies are up to date, organized in one location, and accessible. This may seem basic, but having multiple documents or possibly some team members reviewing outdated information will slow the process. Second, reach out to other stakeholders and collect any recent or relevant information that the organization has started or completed in the past. Stakeholders should be senior leaders within the unit (i.e., deans, associate deans, and faculty governance members) who have the power to make changes in college and university policy. Third, partner with your human resources and institutional research offices to collect data on equity gaps in hiring, promotion, and retention at all levels of instruction (or targeted groups related to your policies). For our group, the policies centered around tenure- and nontenure-track faculty and research professionals. Next, compare this to the institutional data by having a small team reviewing equity gaps in hiring, retention, and promotion to share with the larger group. Simultaneously, if you have the access, compare this to your peer institutions or look for internal departments that have equitable hiring, retention, and promotion. In those cases, reach out to department chairs to review internal practices and policies to help inform your policy updates.

## Organization and Planning

### Organization

Being organized and well planned is key to success. As university members, we are all busy with various responsibilities. When we first began the working group there was confusion on which document we were reviewing, and where edits or suggestions were being made, and at times what the task at hand was. There were assumptions that we all knew where the documents were and how to track our own work (see the first point in resources). After a few chaotic meetings, we moved to a shared folder (Google Drive) and were

able to work in a single document with live tracked changes, task updates, and group work. Once we were all on the same page, work began to move quickly between our meetings, but we were running out of tasks (too many chickens in the coop). We formed subcommittees and broke up into teams of two or three and focused on specific sections. This small move increased our efficiency, and allowed the whole group to transform every policy and deliver a new faculty handbook to senior administration and the faculty governance body for review within a year.

## Planning

We agreed to biweekly meetings, and while this worked for our team, we recognize that this may not be replicated across other units. It is imperative to find a dedicated, regularly set time that works for the majority of your team early in the semester. One recommendation, do not let one or two people hold up forward movement by trying to find a time that fits every schedule. In those cases, make sure to provide detailed notes or recordings for members to review if they miss a meeting. Last, make sure you are consistent. During the year, there were only a few meetings that were rescheduled or canceled with each meeting ending with updated tasks and timelines to keep the group moving forward.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have laid out three processes that are imperative to build into sustainable institutional level equity work. Self-reflection is a personal and life-long process, and with practice builds efficacy to self-identity, self-correct, and fosters personal accountability. Focused antiracist committee work should be developed on the college level and supported top-down and bottom-up. Shared responsibility, mutual respect, and reciprocation between the committee members and their department colleagues supports a collective and systemic approach. Finally, equity changes will not occur without updating policy and practice to guide institutional procedures.

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## Building an Antiracist Workplace

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**T**he Antiracist Workplace Working Group tackled the themes and topics that related to the disparate experiences, feelings of belonging, and sense of value of faculty and staff in the workplace. The focus on anti-Black racism contributed to the Black and White tension that pushes other marginalized groups out of the conversation (i.e., those who are not “dark” enough to be considered Black or “white” enough to be considered White) purely on the basis of personal appearances, such as White-passing or Afro-Latine/x, or their upbringing, language capital, and social capital among others. The inclusion of these other minorities’ points of view was crucial, and the group members welcomed their voices. Although we do not make explicit the specific views of the members of these groups, we draw broad lines that summarize the general impact of racism or exclusionary practices on the well-being of the workplace, and more explicitly the university as a specific kind of workplace.

### Random and Real Thoughts and Actions of Racialized Minorities at Work

- *Listen carefully to the voices in the hallway. If it’s quiet, then it is safe to leave your office. If it’s not, pay careful attention to who is walking by. Cautiously open the door and look both ways before stepping into the hallway.*

- *Go to the bathroom on a different floor to minimize exposure and increase safety. If possible, don't go to the bathroom while you are at work, which may make you safer from micro- or macroaggressions.*
- *Higher-ranking colleagues hold academic prerogatives and freedoms, which could impact the lower ranks, anyone with a different status, race, gender, or any of the intersectional crossroads. They sometimes determine what you are worth, capable of, or which opportunities you have access to (or not). They sometimes share their frustration in the hallway, classroom, office, or copy room. And although that is not okay, whom are you going to tell? Plus, nobody may believe you. Their work matters more because they might be high-profile researchers or enjoy other privileges granted to them by their societal position.*
- *Even when you keep your door office closed, hold virtual office hours, listen for voices out in the hallway, come in and out of the building using exit stairs, and stop going to the bathroom. There is that time that you meet that colleague in the middle of the corridor. You freeze. There is no escape! You shake in fear of what is coming, swallow hard, suppressing your desire to scream for help, sweat, and kindly decline an invitation to have a conversation. You make it clear that you must go to the bathroom before going to teach when your worst nightmare becomes a reality. The colleague says, "THEN I WILL WALK YOU TO THE BATHROOM!" You just said no! Someone is following you to the bathroom. You sprint to safety! You just said NO; why does this person think it is okay not to listen to you?*

These anecdotes are examples of workplace tensions that reflect the spatial confinements that members of minoritized groups, or of traditionally underrepresented and marginalized communities, experience in the workplace. These spatial or reflexive oppressions are unfortunately not limited to the workplace. We may very well remember the instance when the esteemed Black Harvard faculty member, Henry Louis Gates, was humiliated on the porch of his own house and suffered the indignation of arrest because the police could not or did not bother trying to determine that he owned the property (MacIntosh, 2009).

These instances constitute moments lived by real human beings who are simply attempting to go about their daily lives and contribute to an environment to which they have, for the most, part been invited into on the basis of their qualifications, or from the determination that they do have something

worthwhile to contribute to the workplace or the society at large. Short of that language of invitation, and here we would consider the Gates case, it is simply an issue of basic human rights that all citizens should experience in a presumed democratic society. The mention of the invitation presumes that there be, in these circumstances of exclusion, “hosts,” on the one hand, who should tend to the well-being of their “guests,” on the other hand. Even if there were institutional or individual keepers of the tradition, those who would be tasked to oversee the well-being and sustenance of the institution in question, it is a leap to assume that the role of guardian entails, or is synonymous with, one of ownership.

But, whether as guardians, free agents, or putative owners of the institutions that preserve and reinforce a particular, or sets of, tradition, these individuals do not question their role or possessive stances. In this nonreflective stance, such individuals embody the boundaries of the spatial environment they surveil and promote. They constitute the walls within which members of excluded groups are made to operate, or, as in the anecdotes above, they form the bodies that confront the excluded daily. Such actions and impositions do impact the manner in which individuals who navigate unfamiliar and, more often than not, hostile environments experience their beings in such spaces. These spaces thus inevitably yield classifications that distinguish between those that presumably belong, based on some criteria, and those who do not, again based on those same criteria.

## **The Myth of the Neutral Workplace**

Understanding the workplace objectively and in a racialized society (that is, understanding it as exclusionary for some and thereby affecting the behaviors of all who take part in that environment) is contrary to the experience of those shielded by privilege to not seeing the racialized character of the workplace or society for that matter. Thus seeing, or not seeing, the workplace through a racialized lens depends on the positionality of some faculty. On college and university campuses, dominant group members are granted unearned privileges based on the perception that membership belongs to those with certain characteristics and values related to that particular social group (Edwards, 2006; Lechuga et al., 2009). When we interject the category of race, gender, or sexual orientation, we realize, furthermore, that there is a level of immunity reserved for White faculty and staff that people of color mostly, women, and



LGBTQ+ people do not enjoy. When tenure classifications, as yet another category, are added to these racial impediments, we come to acknowledge that nontenured and nontenure-track faculty and staff, too, succumb to the effects of the deficit of privilege.

This chapter introduces the overarching general ideas that emerged within the Antiracist Workplace Working Group, particularly concerning racism. Most people of color are familiar with White privilege and White fragility which is feelings of discomfort or defensiveness White people experience when confronted with their role in racial inequality or racial injustice (DiAngelo 2018). If and when they have somehow decoded the unspoken rules that maintain such privilege and fragility and follow them successfully (i.e., by successfully adhering to without unsettling their “White” counterparts), the persons of color (in the case of race) might experience the illusion or feelings of belongingness. There is another attribution that contributes to exclusion but is less spoken about. Cabrera et al. (2017), in fact, believe there is an additional peculiar condition they refer to as “White immunity” that is associated with unfair and unjust treatment. Cabrera et al. state, “White immunity means that People of Color have not historically, and not temporarily, been guaranteed their rights, justice, and equitable social treatment; however, White people are because they have protection from this disparate treatment” (2017, p. 82).

It is not difficult to imagine that Cabrera et al.’s work and that of others who work in the area could lead to some of the literature that highlight the fact that some of the unspoken rules and codes in the racist and racialized workplace can impact the being and productivity of the raced working individuals negatively. These codes and unspoken rules by definition are not easily recognizable, and because they are unrecognizable or unstated, they protect or advantage some, to the detriment of others. Furthermore, the making of guidelines and rules to govern or dictate behaviors for invisible conditions and structures can easily have a negative effect on the morale in the workplace. The low morale that would follow from these conditions and guidelines would in fact be the result of not articulating as clearly as one can that we, in the United States, are still living in the post slavery period that race studies professor Christina Sharpe or social justice activist Bryan Stevenson have tried to remind us of. To the extent that we cannot articulate and make clear that these conditions exist, we are prevented from identifying their constituents and consequently are kept from fully revealing them and from applying proper remedies to them.

Again, that impotence follows from the fact that the laws, codes, and rules that would apply to such conditions are not formulated.

When racist and racialized rules are unformulated, the actions that promote White privilege and protect White fragility persist and their persistence is protected. The White immunity that results from this protection is thus harder to understand and overcome when there are no clear guidelines on how to respond to invisible conditions that lead to uncomfortable and unacceptable behavior perpetrated on people of color. Correspondingly, there is a huge burden placed on those who call out behaviors perceived as aggressive, to show that they are not overreacting or are too sensitive or paranoid. Behaviors that are perceived as racist or demeaning, but veiled and exhibited in an exclusionary social environment, have negative consequences for those who denounce them, especially if, again because they are veiled, there are no clear rules against them. The negative consequences of any demonstration of discomfort resulting from racist behaviors and conditions can and often do negatively impact career promotion, mentoring, networking, as well as physical and mental health. These further create a workplace that is conducive to an inevitable slow burnout if they are ignored and a fast burnout if the individual resists or confronts them.

### **The University as a Microcosm of Society at Large**

The university is often a door into the society that the next generation will create. But more importantly, the university is often an institution that reflects aspirations of the society in which it operates. The university also serves in an aspirational role as it mitigates the social ills and marshals the strengths of the society to facilitate the participation of all current and prospective citizens. The university can help reveal or add meaning and context to the relevant but unspoken rules that govern the society in question. This is true in democracies but particularly pertinent to autocratic environments.

Some of these unspoken rules may reflect practices and attitudes that may have been operant at a time in the society but for some reason have little relevance for the contemporary. Some of these rules may include conceptions of appurtenance, racial limits, class, and expected gender roles. An inclusive society will deploy institutions to facilitate the recognition of these social boundaries. We see the university as one such institution, and we are motivated to write this chapter by the belief that the aspirational role of the university is paramount (Souffrant, 2015, pp. 237–255).



Figure 1. Overt Vs. Covert Racism. Reproduced with permission from The General Commission on Religion and Race of The United Methodist Church ([www.r2hub.org](http://www.r2hub.org)).

The university is a portal through which, among other things, we also uncover racist rules and practices that impede inclusion but through its various research ventures might offer models for a functioning and thriving multicultural and pluralist society. Our interest in this aspirational role of the university springs from the realization that some of the unspoken rules we have mentioned above may promote socially acceptable practices that constitute covert racism. The unsuspecting university may itself be a social environment that harbors racist practices and, despite its best efforts, overlooks the covert racism that lingers underneath the surface of that cathedral of free expression, learning, creativity, and knowledge. The graphic on overt and covert racism (Figure 1) shows how overt racism is just the tip of the iceberg. The pattern that it reveals can be applied to the university. When done, it suggests that although we might accept the notion that in general, and given our history of racism in the society, socially unacceptable practices of overt racism are not acceptable and thus not present in today's higher education workplace, covert racism, however, has been present for a long time and continues to linger.

The recognition of socially acceptable practices as potentially racist and toxic to the workplace can destabilize compartments of the members therein. In turn, that destabilization risks triggering, in the Manichean world that we

have cultivated, a White fragility. The fragility referenced here consists of the sentiment that some persons considered White, or who have taken themselves to be White and thus privileged, may feel that their world, and its associated privilege and supremacy, is being challenged, and as a result they may experience a sense of confusion. As they witness in real time that their view of the world is challenged by the experiences of others and, in the worst of cases, awoken from their racist slumber to a recognition that the world that “Whiteness” promotes is antagonistic to the well-being of members of racialized groups, the resultant expressions of fragility unmask the White privilege that undergirds the structures of our racist societies at large. We overlook that connection at our own peril. Left unexamined, the privilege perpetuates White immunity and the vicious circle repeats itself.

## **Building the University as an Antiracist Workplace**

Building an antiracist workplace requires that we uncover the covert racism in order to invite critical and restorative actions and practices. We believe that the foundational bricks of an antiracist workplace can begin with the concepts listed in the section on covert racism only if the overt racism part has been effectively dealt with. We offer this preliminary solution with the awareness that institutional efforts to eradicate racism or to convert the workplace into an antiracist one will trigger unpleasant and uncomfortable dialogue. But if we assume our aspirational role seriously, it is a conversation well worth having, if not for the sake of the faculty and staff, then at least for the sake of our students.

We do not expect students to pass an English class when they commit egregious grammatical mistakes. Likewise, we cannot expect a functioning citizen who commits to the mission of the university, as a window or bridge to current and future societies, to leave the university and enter society with a defect, a racist deficiency. As we fall short of that mission, we will have been complicit in placing the burden of doing the antiracist work squarely on the backs and shoulders of the excluded and underrepresented in our midst. In short, we will have placed the burden of doing the emotional labor associated with creating and sustaining an antiracist workplace squarely on the shoulders of people of color and other marginalized groups.

Furthermore, it is not simply that the burden itself is unbearable. It is that, to be sure, at least morally, but added emotional weight that we expect the marginalized to carry consists in the fact that in such a racist and exclusionary

environment, the excluded and underrepresented would have no other recourse but to disregard their emotions and be forced to acquiesce alone or as a group in patterns of behavior that are inconsistent with their emotional and existential well-being. We would have asked in these accumulated burdens the excluded to participate in their own irrelevance. In such situations, we impose on the unrepresented the paradoxical task of contributing to their own moral erasure as human beings worthy of respect and dignity. There is thus a deep moral harm involved here.

With this moral harm revealed, we think to have articulated that it is in fact imperative to identify, examine, discuss, and be cognizant of the nefarious impact of covert racism. We shall not discuss nor repeat the categories here, but the entire list can be accessed in the figures referred to above. Furthermore, an overwhelming amount of the literature on racism explains these concepts. Some of the work can be gleaned on the UNC Charlotte faculty's Canvas course called DiversityEdu.

To place our argument, we can draw on the university's genesis to understand why it might now look the way it does and why, in addition, it could benefit from some antiracist initiatives. UNC Charlotte, if the historical stories are to be believed, is an institution that has its source in the effort to educate returning veterans. It was to have served as a counter, or a parallel, institution in the budding urban city of Charlotte, to Johnson C. Smith University, which, in a segregated South, served mainly African American students. What would become our contemporary UNC Charlotte was meant to serve the ethnic European contingent of the city. It is not surprising that in its inception, the university was a White-focused and White-predominant institution. Given this historical context and impetus, the majority of the faculty, student, and perhaps even staff population, one would presume in a persistently segregated Southern urban environment, was and, to no surprise, continues to be White. The demographics of the institution have changed since its inception, but it remains a mainly "White" institution with the student body and the maintenance staff being increasingly more racially diverse than the faculty and administrators.

We do not, however, despair since we believe that the university is also well placed to be a model of inclusive practice. The city of Charlotte is changing. Its population is increasingly diverse, but more importantly, the university is poised to educate the next generation of citizens for a world in which the

majority of the population is and will be non-European. Equipping students with the tools to be the next generation's leaders will require that our faculty be well versed in antiracist practices and pedagogy if they wish to remain relevant as they assume their pedagogic responsibilities.

### **Tackling Racist Workplaces Through Accountability: CLAS as an Example**

One can work to eliminate the practices that impede an antiracist workplace. A significant component of that work must be to encourage leaders in the workplace to practice accountability. This may involve drafting policies that are clear and actionable and instituting a culture of respect and inclusion. In our case, the effective antiracist university will encourage its leaders to practice a type of accountability that seeks “to dismantle systemic and structural problems associated with racism in higher education, [consequently] some White leaders will need remedial education that focuses on systems of Whiteness, power, and oppression rather than training on embracing individual tolerance and inclusive excellence” (Ash et al., 2020, p. 4).

By all accounts, our contemporary social environment is one in which tolerance is insufficient. On a parallel track, we are also witnessing at once, and unfortunately, that crimes, assaults (verbal and physical), and brutality of all sorts are perpetrated against persons of color, or against those deemed not to belong by reason of appearance or otherwise. Recent events may suggest that we are currently experiencing a new social environment. One might argue that the new environment is one in which there is a normalization of exclusionary, if racist, actions.

This practiced exclusion has negative health consequences. We are increasingly aware that many chronic diseases result from racist practices. Hypertension, heart diseases, and even mental health ailments are all shown to have some connections or directly result from discomforting and exclusionary environments and workplaces (Okechukwu, Souza, Davis, and Castro, 2014). Many lives are thus by extension lost prematurely due to systemic racism around the country. As such, this new social environment prefaced above is one within which an injection of inclusive excellence is needed. Inclusive excellence also entails the active creation of an antiracist workplace in the manner we have proposed in the preceding quotation.

Many institutions, corporations, and business owners, among others, have likewise responded to this acknowledged state of affairs of exclusion, with a commitment to inclusion in their diversity statements. Our own College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) has adopted a similar approach, and it reads as follows:

#### Diversity Statement

Consistent with the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' (CLAS) dedication to critical thinking and engaged citizenship, we hereby affirm our commitment as a public institution of higher learning to diversity, access, equity and inclusion in all aspects of our teaching, scholarship, and professional activities. Our lives, perspectives and practices are enriched when we actively engage in discourse and inclusive actions around complex ideas and issues, whether they pertain to race and ethnicity; sex; gender identity; political viewpoints; sexual orientation; special health needs; age; belief system; country of origin; or socio-economic status.

Beyond words, we affirm our commitment to behaving in ways that respect people regardless of their differences and affirm our commitment to: no tolerance of behaviors that are exclusionary or disrespectful of these differences, educating people about how diversity influences us all, and educating diverse individuals in ways that are inclusive.

The CLAS Diversity Statement has facilitated and encouraged a number of working groups to help assess the state of affairs in the college. These working groups, in turn, have informed the work on this chapter as they have also helped recognize other overarching and important ideas that may contribute to an antiracist workplace. The members of the working groups were motivated by one important idea: that each member of the university, and, more specifically, members of the faculty and staff of CLAS, should feel that they belong, that they are listened to.

Accordingly, the staff and faculty would expect that the college institute policies that address the concerns of racism and exclusion in practice, and support or establish programs that address equity issues in terms of tenure and promotion, mentoring, and networking of faculty. To complete the circle of accountability, which includes recognition of the problem, staff and faculty would support policies and practices to rectify inequitable policies. Finally, the staff and faculty would encourage tracking the progress of these initiatives and



policies by systematically collecting the relevant data and using it to make the necessary adjustments that would be based on the data. To organize and address these actions, the Antiracist Workplace working group identified four thematic foci that could help marshal the college's efforts to be more inclusive. They consisted of:

- Belonging and Policy vs. Practice
- Data Collection and Tracking
- Listening
- Faculty—how racism can affect promotions, annual reviews, mentoring, etc.

### **Belonging and Policy vs. Practice (and Other Concerns)**

The CLAS race and social justice initiative is a potential model for instituting an antiracist workplace. We began this process examining the findings of the working group in the area of Belonging and Policy vs. Practice where we tackled how to address gaps between policy and practices that impact a sense of belonging. The group initially assessed existing university policies (more specifically UNC Charlotte legal policies 101.17 and 501) to determine whether they may influence a faculty or staff member's performance and feeling of belonging.

The group members that explored this theme found that the language in these policies is often vague and unclear, and the description and procedures they allude to could be further explained. Since policies are dictates to be followed, they should be clearly understood, meaning that the basic definitions and explanations of the policy items should be obvious in order to facilitate their concrete applications in practice.

In this area of Belonging and Policy vs. Practice, group members also found that the policies were difficult to locate. Reviewing them is more complicated than it should be. Transparency would facilitate clearly addressing issues that arise and point to the steps that need to be taken to resolve the issues. In the end, we should all be able to determine when issues arise, what recourse is available, and whom to contact and how. Even when policies are clear and transparent, they would need to be regularly updated and clearly enforced. There is also a need, given the topic at hand (i.e., micro- and macroaggressions and exclusionary acts and policies), to gather the relevant data about these instances. At the moment when incidents occur, it is not clear where the data



is stored. That is important because examples of existing incidents of harassment, microaggressions, intimidation, biased behavior, bullying, threats, violence, and retaliation, when exhibited, will provide context for evaluating the strength and relevance of the policies already in place. A strong investigative process needs to be in place, and the methods for possible resolutions will also need to be known. As these policies are clarified, one would expect that there be training, concurrently, of all college faculty and staff regarding the existing policies, protections, resources, and support available at the university, or at least at the college, level. As the engines to respond to exclusionary practices are limpid, employees across the units will be encouraged to perform to the best of their ability and irrespective of their complex identities.

Finally, the working group that considered the theme of belonging and practice proposed that the college develop a pre- and post-policy implementation climate survey to assess the experience of faculty and staff with respect to discrimination, bias, violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, micro-aggression, unwelcoming workplaces, and more. The working group believed that the survey, when instituted, will best illustrate faculty and staff perceptions of belongingness and its relations to job performance and satisfaction.

## **Data Collection and Tracking**

Working group members considering Data Collection and Tracking found the existing data about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our college and offered a preliminary presentation of such data. The data in Figures 2 and 3 are provided courtesy of the ADVANCE Faculty Affairs and Diversity Office (FADO); it presents an example of the type of data that would help make visible the progress toward a more inclusive workplace.

This working group recommended a DEI data spreadsheet with information for each of the working groups. It is also recommended DEI data from the university regarding CLAS's efforts and that the data toward inclusive excellence be tracked each year to measure the progress that CLAS makes or is making to render the workplace more inclusive. The data collection working group realizes that DEI assessment requires attentive analysis, so they proposed that CLAS hire a DEI assessment coordinator.

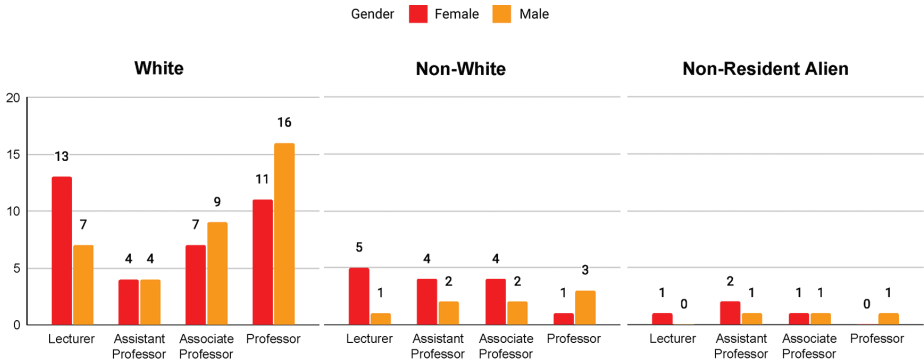


Figure 2. CLAS Faculty Rank by Race. Reproduced with permission from UNCC ADVANCE FADO.

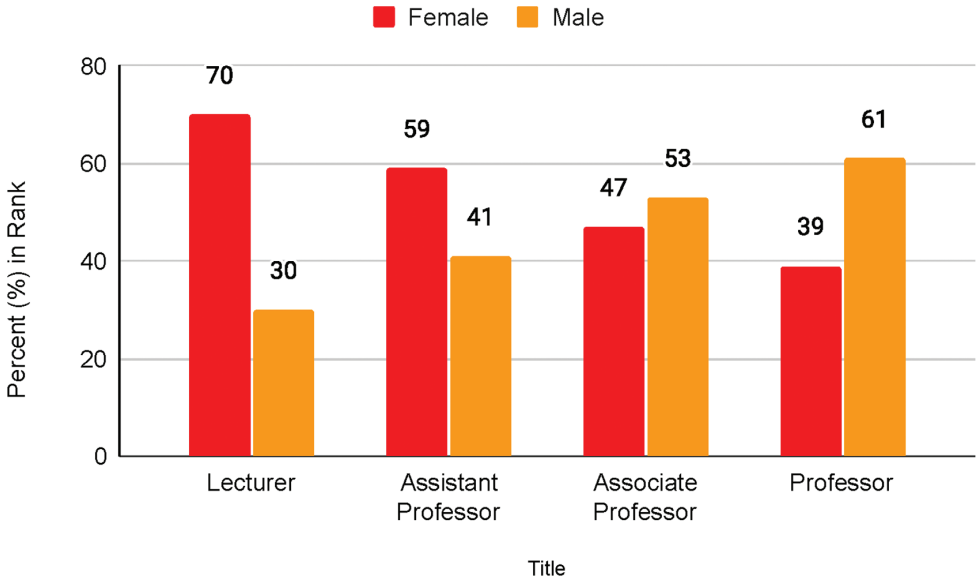


Figure 3. CLAS Faculty Rank by Gender. Reproduced with permission from UNCC ADVANCE FADO.

## Listening

The working group members focusing on Listening aimed to understand how to create a listening platform where any member of a minority and under-represented population can voice their concerns about racism without fear of negative consequences for doing so. This group recommended creating a “Listening Project” that centers attention on listening (i.e., the act of “being heard”) as a skill and art and on its impact. This Listening Project would include deep and compassionate listening for unheard and unheeded voices because we assume that the will and the skill to listen brings new perspectives to both problems and solutions. This Listening Project, no doubt an elaborate undertaking, would involve topics not completely elaborated on here. It would include students as well and require:

- Deep listening interviews of unheard and unheeded voices;
- Facilitated discussions, collecting information as well as experiences;
- Focus groups;
- Workshops on active and compassionate listening;
- Asking minority student groups if they would be willing to share the experiences that have been revealed as a result of projects such as the “Talking Circles” (a safe space for Indigenous students to speak freely) from the Indigenous Students Group, for example;
- Encouraging other student groups to start similar projects; and
- Listening Sessions similar to those that the provost hosted in the Fall semester of 2021.

Intentional listening honed from participation in the Listening Project is very important. It promises to spur reflection on the fluid dynamics of the campus. As such, it would entail surveying all members of the university community, including students, student workers, staff, and faculty, regarding their experiences of invisibility in classroom settings, and in their community and workplace in general.

## Racism and Faculty Promotion, Mentoring, and Networking

The last theme, Racism and Faculty Promotion, Mentoring, and Networking, concerned the disparities that exist in matters of faculty promotion, mentoring, and networking. Working group members, however, paid particular

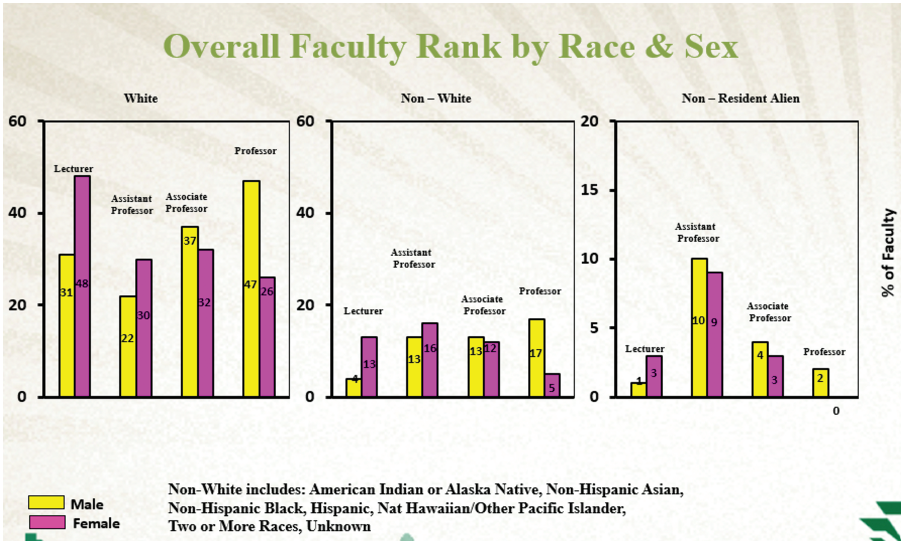


Figure 4. Diversity Score Cards 2018. Overall Faculty Rank by Race and Sex at UNC Charlotte. Reproduced with permission from UNCC ADVANCE FADO.

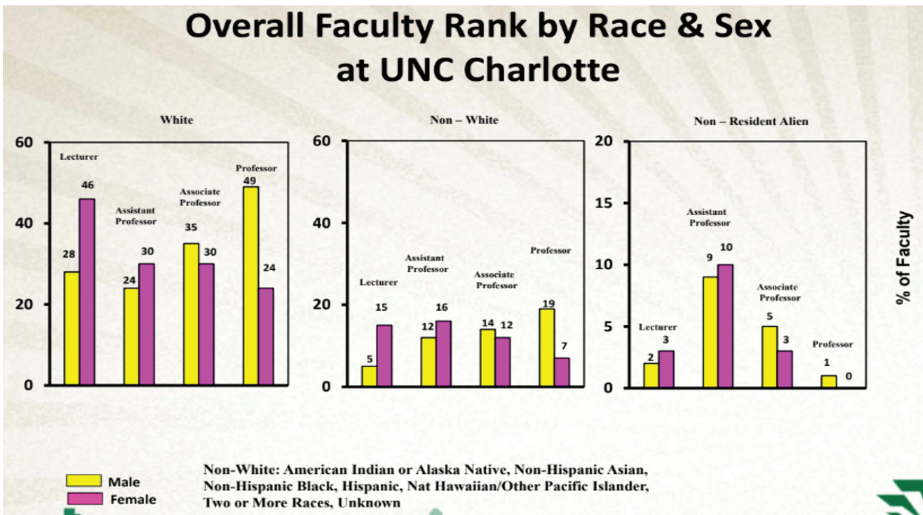


Figure 5. Diversity Score Cards 2019. Overall Faculty Rank by Race and Sex at UNC Charlotte. Reproduced with permission from UNCC ADVANCE FADO.

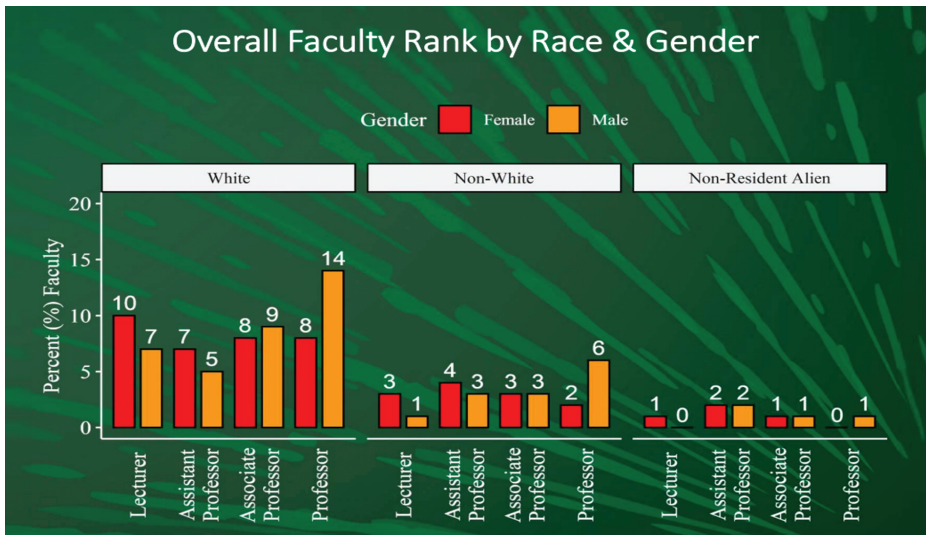


Figure 6. Diversity Score Card 2020. Overall Faculty Rank by Race and Sex at UNC Charlotte. Reproduced with permission from UNCC ADVANCE FADO.

attention to the mentoring of faculty of color. To illustrate the current state of affairs at the university, the working group looked at the data of the last three diversity score cards available from the ADVANCE FADO office for 2018, 2019, and 2020. See Figures 4–6. The group realized that the ADVANCE FADO office implemented yearly seminars, workshops, and, specifically, a mentoring program for new hires. Participating mentors and mentees are given the opportunity to connect. It could not be established from the data, however, whether there was any tangible relation between mentoring and positive outcomes concerning promotions. Connections between mentoring and promotion need to be studied further as do those between hiring and retention.

## Conclusion

We recognize the positive value in the efforts of UNC Charlotte to create awareness of the work needed to build a safer workplace for all. Change is needed, and accountability is vital to promote equitable outcomes. It goes without saying that each contributor to this university must be respected and valued. The faculty, staff, and students who experience the university must be

heard and must be granted the opportunity to speak of their experiences as their daily involvement with and within the university is a constitutive element of the living history of this institution. This expressed belief is consonant with the proposal of those like Calderon and Wise (2012) and Wise (2020) who explore the concept of “White allies.”

We can assume that the efforts of the university are reflective of its antiracist intentions. In that effort, the university might be considered a prospective ally. If so, and consistent with its history, the university for its part is doing the work that Calderon and Wise would expect from a “White ally,” namely, that it acknowledges the racial privilege that it has accorded many of its constituents and the implications of that accorded privilege. It is time now that it rearranges itself to be more reflective of its current and prospective constituency. With that challenge in mind, it is laudable that the university aspires to make the institution a worthy ally and that it creates, in the process, an antiracist workplace. We hope to have provided some working thoughts on this future for the thriving workplace that it aspires to be.

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## Making Race and Social Justice Matter in Faculty Research and Outreach

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### Understanding the Present by Examining the Past

The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery in 2020 reignited the Black Lives Matter global protest movement, possibly becoming the largest mass movement in U.S. history (Buchanan et al., 2020). The movement not only brought attention to the pervasive racial injustices that are rooted in histories of slavery and colonialism and continue to exist within the criminal justice system, and manifest as state-sanctioned killings of unarmed Black people such as Charlotte's Keith Lamont Scott in 2016 and Jonathan Ferrell in 2013, but also pointed to institutional racism in all areas of society. This racial reckoning also highlighted questions of racial justice, equity, and the legacies of slavery in higher education as universities increasingly acknowledged their historical entanglements with racial slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, such as being founded by slave traders, owning and selling enslaved people for profit, or exploiting enslaved labor to construct campus buildings (Perry & Barr, 2021).

The University of North Carolina System boasted record enrollment with over 244,000 students in 2021 and comprises 17 institutions, starting





Image 1. Photo Credit: Office of Congresswoman Alma Adams, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

with UNC Chapel Hill, which was built with enslaved people’s labor in 1789 (American Association of University Professors, 2022a). The *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision of 1896 sanctioned racial segregation in U.S. institutions, proclaiming the doctrine of “separate but equal” and facilitating local prohibitions of African Americans from accessing public resources such as higher education for nearly 6 decades. The University of North Carolina



Image 2. Photo Credit: Fibonacci Blue from Minnesota, USA, CC BY 2.0  
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at Chapel Hill was racially segregated until it desegregated its law school in 1951; and after the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision overturned *Plessy*, followed by subsequent court battles, Black undergraduates enrolled at UNC in 1955 (Beauregard, 2022). The shadow of these historical legacies continues to loom large, shaping broad racial inequalities in higher education even on campuses that were founded well after the antebellum era.

For example, though the University of North Carolina at Charlotte was founded in 1946, portions of the land on which it sits once included the Alexander family cotton plantation on which 30 African Americans were enslaved in the 19th century (Alexander Family, 1818–2020). Racial inequality continues to affect the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area, with Black children disproportionately affected by some of the lowest rates of upward mobility in the nation (Chetty et al., 2014; Boraks, 2020). Simmering frustrations rooted in this racial and economic stratification eventually culminated in mass protests and uprisings across the city of Charlotte in September 2016 in response to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department’s fatal shooting of Keith Lamont Scott. Scott was a 43-year-old Black man who, according to relatives and neighbors, was unarmed and waiting in his car to retrieve his child from school at

the time of the shooting. UNC Charlotte students staged peaceful protests and a “lie-in” vigil for Scott, who was killed only minutes away from campus. According to the American Association of University Professors *Report of a Special Committee: Governance, Academic Freedom, and Institutional Racism in the University of North Carolina System*, the UNC System is challenged by a climate where partisan politics, particularly state-level Republican agendas, increasingly place constraints on the retention of talented Black faculty and faculty members’ academic freedom with regard to issues of race, economics, and politics. For example, UNC Chapel Hill’s refusal to confer tenure to journalist and editor of *The 1619 Project* Nikole Hannah-Jones harkened to concerns about Black women’s experiences of intersecting race and gender oppression within higher education. Additionally, public commemoration of Confederate soldiers such as the Silent Sam statue on Chapel Hill’s campus provoked racial tensions that finally culminated in its removal in 2018 while presenting further challenges to the racial climate within the UNC System (American Association of University Professors, 2022a, pp. 20–24).

These histories of racial oppression and dispossession foreground the underrepresentation of Black students, Black faculty, and other faculty of color, and intellectual content that spurred the late 1960s protest movement for Black studies and resulted in the founding of UNC Charlotte’s Africana studies department in 1969 (Office of University Communications, 2021). Since that time, UNC Charlotte continues to struggle toward equity in student retention, and in retaining Black faculty and other faculty of color whose hidden labor in diversity and inclusion initiatives are often undervalued. Today, UNC Charlotte is one of the fastest growing campuses in the UNC System, with just over 30,000 students, 1,100 full- and part-time faculty, and 24 doctoral programs. Sixty-two percent of students are transfers from North Carolina community colleges, and one-third of students identify as first-generation college students. As North Carolina’s urban research university, there is a need for UNC Charlotte to expand the university’s mission to meet the needs of the broader Charlotte-Mecklenburg community by making racial and social justice integral values of the university.

### **Committing to Race and Social Justice at UNCC**

The College for Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) at UNC Charlotte has committed to “eliminating systemic racism wherever it exists in its practices and policies” (<https://inside-clas.charlotte.edu/race-and-social-justice>). This book, *Race and Social Justice: Building an Inclusive College Through Awareness*,



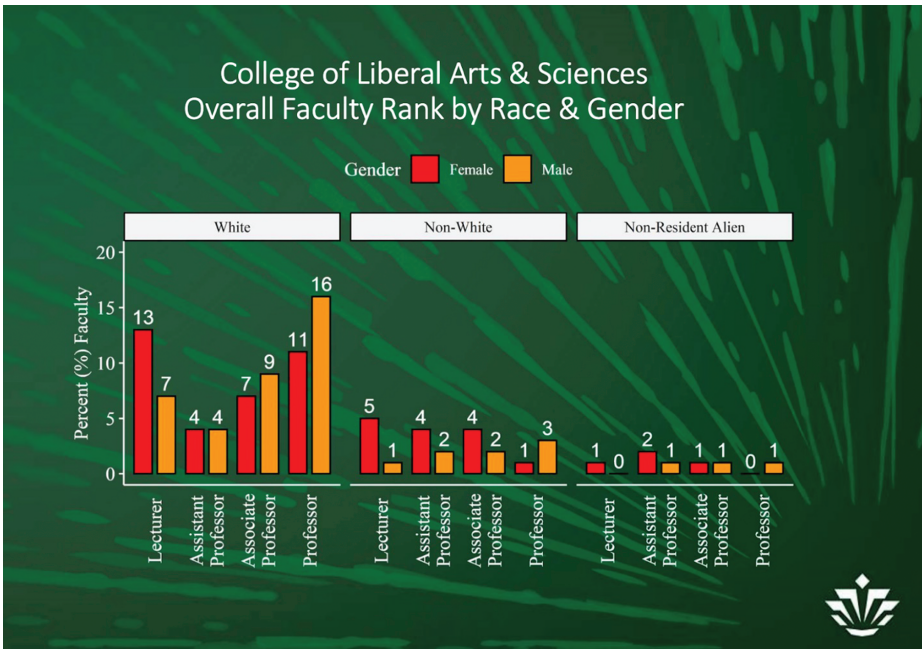


Image 3. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences overall faculty rank by race and gender. Diversity Score Cards College of Liberal Arts Fall 2020. Reproduced with permission from UNCC ADVANCE FADO.

*Advocacy, and Action*, aims to transform UNC Charlotte, and hopefully higher education more broadly, by collectivizing racial and social justice efforts through policy audits, evaluating undergraduate and graduate student recruitment and success, and identifying concentration areas for creating an antiracist workplace. The current chapter highlights the goals and progress of the Race and Social Justice Faculty Research and Outreach Working Group, which has focused on (1) encouraging, (2) recognizing, (3) rewarding, and (4) supporting faculty engaged in diversity and inclusion research, teaching, and service.

### ADVANCE FADO’s Mission at UNC Charlotte

The UNC Charlotte ADVANCE Faculty Affairs and Diversity Office (FADO) was originally founded in 2006 to increase the representation of women faculty and women of color faculty, particularly in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields. In its current mission, ADVANCE FADO “builds faculty diversity and promotes faculty success through research and programming on recruitment, re-appointment, promotion and

tenure practices; policy reform; mentoring; leadership and career development” (<https://advance.charlotte.edu/about-advance-fado/mission-unc-charlotte-advance-faculty-affairs-and-diversity-office>). ADVANCE FADO has collected data on faculty and student demographics. According to the ADVANCE FADO diversity score card for the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, as of 2020, White and non-White women represent a higher proportion of contingent faculty than men. In the university overall, women faculty are highly represented among lecturers, assistant professors, and associate professors, but are increasingly underrepresented among full professors. Combined with established implicit biases involved in the tenure process, women faculty and especially women of color are systematically disadvantaged for tenure. For those who gain tenure, there also appears to be a disadvantage for them to gain full professor. In the 2018 university-wide COACHE Faculty Satisfaction Survey for UNC Charlotte, faculty of color and underrepresented minority faculty had some concerns regarding promotion to full professor. Representation of a college that has a majority female population, and increasingly one of color, means it is imperative to attract and retain women faculty of color at all ranks but especially at the rank of the full professor (COACHE, 2018).

### **Achieving Tenure and the Costs of Invisible Labor**

The issue of outreach and community engagement as it relates to tenure requires that we establish the contours of outreach and community engagement in terms of overlap with research. The American Association of University Professors recently published a study of institutional tenure practices, and found that 17.6% of all surveyed institutions reported having made tenure standards more stringent in the last 5 years (American Association of University Professors, 2022b). Among those who increased standards, 78.9% reported that this was related to research and only 14% related it to “other” standards including things like community engagement, student success, and mentoring and advising (p. 4). However, some institutions are moving toward including diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) criteria in their tenure standards. Of all surveyed institutions, 21.5% included DEI criteria in tenure standards; however, this average was brought down by non-PhD-granting and small-to-medium institutions where less than 20% of these institutions included DEI criteria in tenure standards.

In total, tenured Black women made up 2.1% of the tenured faculty in the U.S. universities in the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* 2019 data set (June & O’Leary, 2021). The data shows that at UNC Charlotte, Black women tenured

Table 1. Percentage of Black Female Tenured Professors at UNC Charlotte, 2019

Institution	Tenured professors	Black female tenured professors	Their percentage of total
University of North Carolina at Charlotte	528	18	3.4

professors make up 3.4% of tenured faculty (see Table 1). Black faculty face invalidating comments about their research, particularly if it focuses on (or is assumed to focus on) race, Black people, or other areas or populations that are personally relevant: the phrase “me-search” is often used to discount their scholarly contributions (Harris, 2021). The far too frequent perception is that the research by Black people about Black people is “subjective” and “biased” and does not contribute more generally to the academic literature—while White scholars’ study of Western Europe and North America rarely, if ever, receives such scrutiny.

Moreover, institutional expectations and requirements of those hoping to gain tenure devalue work that is common among underrepresented groups like Black women. The growing numbers of Black college students, including more Black women than Black men, have heightened the demands on the small number of Black women faculty (American Council on Education, 2019). Both junior and tenured Black women faculty members are at risk of higher rates of taxation for service work (Johnson, 2020). Through this unrewarded invisible labor, Black women serve on diversity committees, mentor marginalized students, and provide labor to create inclusive spaces in higher education (June, 2015). Not only do these demands detract from the time they can spend on what often counts most in the tenure process (research), but colleges and universities rarely acknowledge the work of mentoring and diversity service in the tenure process (House, 2017; Flaherty, 2020; *The Chronicle*, 2021).

***Encourage. Recognize. Reward. Support: Findings From the Race and Social Working Group on Faculty Research and Outreach***

The dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) at UNC Charlotte called for the formation of working groups (or committees) in the spring of 2021 to explore core areas of race and social justice (RSJ) in the college, including a working group focused on faculty research and outreach. This working

Table 2. Short- and Long-Term Goals of CLAS Action Areas

	Short-term goals	Long-term goals
Encourage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage existing resources</li> <li>• Start an RSJ Research Collaborative in CLAS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a mentorship program for research, grant work, service, creative projects, and public projects</li> <li>• Provide faculty a service or course release to engage in such work</li> <li>• Develop a specialized series focused on RSJ research conducted by CLAS faculty</li> </ul>
Recognize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an ad hoc portion of the College Review Committee's review rubrics to account for RSJ research and outreach</li> <li>• Require all departments and units to report on RSJ work in a more deliberate and intentional manner</li> <li>• Create and disseminate a monthly RSJ digest, as well as improved RSJ-targeted social media on CLAS channels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specify language in the Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) process that values RSJ work for research and outreach</li> <li>• Ensure that RSJ components are found in all workload categories, strategic planning documents, CLAS's contributing documents to the top-tier research efforts, and other significant documents</li> <li>• Meet with university communications staff to pitch ideas for deeper, larger stories</li> </ul>
Reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish stronger connections with existing CLAS and university awards and speaker series, emphasizing the value in highlighting excellence in RSJ research and outreach</li> <li>• Reach out to other internal grant funding programs to determine if and how they consider RSJ in their decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and offer a new award for RSJ research and outreach; and a panel of awardees to show juxtaposition and value of different perspectives and approaches to RSJ work</li> </ul>

	Short-term goals	Long-term goals
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide workshops around topics and ideas central to RSJ work</li> <li>• Integrate RSJ workshops into New Faculty Orientation when faculty are still getting acclimated to university and college life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a college or university Center for Racial and Social Justice Studies</li> <li>• Create a competitive grants program</li> </ul>

group was composed of faculty and staff who volunteered their time from different faculty ranks and staff support in the college.

Initial meetings of the working group, held on Zoom, examined different ways we could organize our thinking around these complex, pervasive issues. We came up with a working definition of our efforts that used four action words to frame the subsequent discussions and plans. The working definition was as follows: “To (1) encourage, (2) recognize, (3) reward, and (4) support research, grant work, service, creative projects, and public projects dedicated to racial and social justice.” We identified short- and long-term steps we could take to accomplish each of our four action words, and then divided into smaller groups to drill down on specific examples at our college level that we needed to emphasize. The following is a brief summary of the short- and long-term actions:

### Encourage

First, we identified short-term action steps to leverage existing resources in order to encourage RSJ. These included surveying CLAS department chairs and existing diversity liaison positions to assess initiatives that already exist for encouraging RSJ in faculty research. In addition to assessing existing efforts, we discussed providing modest stipends for faculty and staff to engage in RSJ research and outreach. We acknowledged that any efforts, including a stipend approach, would need to be coupled with larger university efforts to promote RSJ research and outreach. For example, at the university level there is already a funded internal grant process to support faculty and staff who are engaged in RSJ work.

Another short-term approach was to start an RSJ Research Collaborative in CLAS. We identified straightforward ways to get this started by first creating



a Google group for CLAS faculty and staff who are already doing this work or who are interested in getting more involved. Additionally, we suggested the need to have a social media presence for an RSJ Research Collaborative, such as a Facebook group, or an Instagram or Twitter account. We also discussed the value of creating a website on the CLAS Research page to feature faculty RSJ research. These help tell our narrative as a unit around RSJ.

Second, long-term approaches were identified that had the potential to advance RSJ goals over a great duration of time. For example, a mentorship program for research, grant work, service, creative projects, and public projects would provide a series of supportive opportunities for junior faculty to develop relationships with senior faculty around a shared interest in RSJ. Another long-term approach to encouraging RSJ research and outreach would be to establish a mechanism for providing faculty a service or course release to engage in such work. Similar to existing speaker series in CLAS, a specialized series focused on RSJ research conducted by CLAS faculty would help encourage others to learn more and participate in RSJ work. It could also be an opportunity to invite local, regional, national, or international experts to present on RSJ to a broader audience.

## Recognize

First, there are a number of short-term strategies that provide accessible ways to recognize RSJ work among faculty and staff. One example is to create an ad hoc portion of the College Review Committee's review rubrics to account for RSJ research and outreach, and this can also be done with the Departmental Review Committees. Another example is to require all departments and units to report on RSJ work in a more deliberate and intentional manner, rather than isolating RSJ as a separate category at the end of the reporting system, as it is currently located. This is a good example of a simple, short-term strategy that could have an immediate impact on overall RSJ faculty research and outreach. In addition, short-term approaches should include an emphasis that departments include RSJ work in Annual Merit reviews of faculty and staff, as well as in their 5-year plans. However, these would not be simply as an addendum or footnote at the end in a separate category, but rather included in every category so as to underscore the value of RSJ in the broader CLAS community.

Another central point to our discussions about RSJ work, including the short-term examples above, is that proper recognition not only includes

traditional research and scholarly outreach, but also the public and creative projects, media appearances, talks, volunteering, etc. that faculty and staff do in their RSJ endeavors.

As with any discussion of recognition for RSJ work, we discussed the essential roles that existing and new communications channels in the college will play in ultimate success. Short-term opportunities include creating and disseminating a monthly RSJ digest, as well as improved RSJ-targeted social media on CLAS channels. Long-term approaches to recognize RSJ work include meeting with university communications staff to pitch ideas for deeper, larger stories. This approach would align with university goals around RSJ. Another long-term approach we discussed is to create a separate area of the CLAS website for RSJ work, but one that is not hidden in a location that takes prolonged navigation. Similar to the strategy to use social media, another long-term goal is to link with other universities, advocacy groups, think tanks, activity groups, NGOs, etc. working in RSJ to share information and elevate the work of CLAS faculty and staff.

A long-term approach to adequately recognize RSJ work in CLAS is to specify language in the Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) process that values RSJ work for research and outreach. While this could take a greater amount of time to clarify, it would recognize RSJ work in official personnel documents, thereby solidifying it as a core area of university performance. In a related point about evaluation and performance reviews, rather than make RSJ a separate category, it is imperative to ensure that RSJ components are found in all workload categories (i.e., research, teaching, service for tenure track; teaching, service, and professional development for lecturers; and performance evaluation for staff).

Lastly, a critical point to effectively recognize RSJ work is to make sure these elements are incorporated into every area of strategic planning documents, CLAS's contributing documents to the top-tier research efforts, and other significant documents. This ensures that we activate transformative change, not just additive, box-checking change.

## Reward

As with the other action categories, our vision for rewarding RSJ work includes both short- and long-term goals. We discussed an important short-term goal, one that has already been accomplished, to meet with the inaugural vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion and chief diversity officer. The main

purpose of this meeting was to understand the new internal grant-making process for RSJ work. Formerly known as the Chancellor's Diversity Challenge Grants, the new Inclusive Excellence Grants will similarly support faculty and staff's innovative contributions to RSJ. Given the "evidence-based" approach, the hope is that this grant cycle will both reward and recognize faculty who have done important research as well as those who are at the earlier stages of pursuing this work.

Other short-term approaches are to establish stronger connections with existing CLAS and university awards and speaker series to emphasize the value in highlighting excellence in RSJ research and outreach. For example, CLAS's Personally Speaking series, a speaker series featuring professors who recently published books, and the Bank of America Teaching award are two existing programs designed to reward faculty excellence. In addition, a strategy to reward RSJ work in CLAS is to reach out to other internal grant-funding programs, such as faculty research awards and the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute's Gambrell fellowships, to determine if and how they consider RSJ in their decision making. This could be a short-term approach to collect information, leading to long-term opportunities to reward RSJ research and outreach.

A key long-term approach to rewarding RSJ work in CLAS is to create and offer a new award for RSJ research and outreach with funds or an optional event attached. There are options to have multiple awards that reward faculty in different research areas, for example, in humanities or social sciences, or within social sciences such as quantitative and qualitative research. We also discussed the value of creating a sciences and/or humanities panel of awardees to show juxtaposition and value of different perspectives and approaches to RSJ work. We considered an option to create just one award that included an interdisciplinary team of judges to make sure there was fairness in evaluation across disciplines.

In this process of creating an award for faculty research, we also acknowledged this leaves out the role of CLAS staff in terms of reward. So to that end, we discussed having three awards for each of the three major functions of the university around RSJ: research, teaching, and outreach. However, in an effort to make sure we reached staff, and not just faculty, RSJ work, we considered the idea of offering a staff RSJ award that focused on rewarding substantial contributions by staff to areas of RSJ more closely related to their day-to-day work environments.

## Support

The fourth RSJ action word is support. While support relates to aspects of encouraging, recognizing, and rewarding, there are some distinctive discussions around these themes. The simplest way to support RSJ efforts among faculty and staff is to provide workshops around topics and ideas central to RSJ work. This has already taken place in CLAS with Kendra Jason, associate professor of sociology and RSJ advocate, who convened a series of workshops in 2021–2022. Other short-term approaches like RSJ workshops could be used during New Faculty Orientation when faculty are still getting acclimated to university and college life. This could support and help retain faculty by making a strong first impression.

Another way to support RSJ research and outreach is to establish a college or university Center for Racial and Social Justice Studies. Existing models can be found at Georgetown University and University of Michigan's Ford School for examples of effective ways to create such a unit. This center could then be a hub of faculty and staff RSJ work through interdisciplinary perspectives, including through offering a fellowship to faculty to continue their RSJ work.

Another example of an approach to support RSJ work is to create a competitive grants program. A potential model can be found at UCLA's Racial and Social Justice Grants Program to find examples of projects and programs that seek to support faculty doing RSJ research. One way that this particular grant program could support, rather than just reward or recognize, faculty is to emphasize innovative or new research areas. We discussed how an award would likely function to reward a body of work conducted over a longer period of time. However, a grants program that focused on less established or well-defined areas of RSJ or applying RSJ work to less common disciplines could be an effective way to support developing an RSJ research pipeline.

## Conclusion: Impact of Work, Call for Action

The collective protest and political activism in the wake of George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police, in conjunction with related key scholarly articles (American Association of University Professors, 2022a; Hattery et al., 2022) that we consulted toward writing this book, blatantly expose and stridently denounce and demand an end to the racial injustice and brutality, calling for

structural changes to our institutions, including the university, our own flawed UNC System, and higher education curriculum. Answering the call with a renewed commitment, and reinvigorating and prioritizing problem-posing and problem-solving engagement, the book aims to focus on building an inclusive experience through awareness, conscientization, advocacy, and actions. This must happen across the UNC System, but first and foremost, the curriculum and education are an essential space for liberation and justice. UNC Charlotte 2023 General Education program unequivocally emphasizes this.

In this vein, W. E. B. Du Bois (1902/2016) argued in *The Souls of Black Folk* that public education, critical curriculum, and critical pedagogy should be the driving force in pursuit of community uplift, social transformation, equality, and democracy. Higher education plays a pivotal role, as it has the potential to shape those who will go on to become future educators, lawmakers, politicians, and researchers. Utilizing critical curriculum and critical pedagogy, faculty, administrators, and students can learn together and critically challenge educational and social injustices. This will have a rippling impact on our educational system and society as a whole (Tolman, 2019), as the strong agenda of critical pedagogy for change is grounded on the belief that education and society are intrinsically interrelated; and because of that, the aim of education is for the improvement of social justice for all (McArthur, 2010). Among some of the central characteristics of critical pedagogy that Kincheloe (2008) highlights are its social and educational vision of justice and equality, its dedication to the alleviation of human suffering, the belief that education is inherently political, its commitment to cultivating the intellect, and its regard for teachers as researchers (Jeyaraj, 2020). In this context, an important aim for education is the improvement of social justice through the development of active and engaged citizens (Freire, 1970; McArthur, 2010; Crookes, 2013). Critical pedagogy teaches people to recognize, oppose, and reorganize social forms that are exploitative, racist, classist, sexist, and damaging (Brookfield, 2003).

Echoing Tania D. Mitchell in her “In the Wake of Multiple Pandemics,” the George Floyd sociopolitical moment has created a critical opportunity for higher education to consider how to reveal, respond to, and repair the disparate impacts of COVID-19, structural racism, and economic inequality, and to rethink how colleges and universities engage with their communities (Mitchell, 2022).

Acknowledging multiple pandemics drives attention to those who are hyper-marginalized in our society and requires higher education institutions

to focus on people and communities of color. It means naming the disproportionate impacts of these multiple pandemics on minoritized communities and centering our efforts on transforming the material conditions that sustain these inequalities. To accomplish this, the community engagement work of colleges and universities should be revealing. It should illuminate the systemic injustices that reify and deepen the marginalization already experienced. Moreover, it should focus on the policies, practices, conditions, and experiences that shape the everyday realities of the poor and people of color (Mitchell, 2022).

Shifting higher education community engagement practice in the wake of pandemics and in ways reflected in the efforts at George Floyd Square means building and maintaining relationships with movements and organizations led by Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in the spaces where people active in these movements and organizations live and work. And the commemorative George Floyd Square suggests that those organizations don't always need to be formally recognized nonprofit organizations, but must have passionate and committed leaders who understand the unique and diverse needs of the community.

Our community engagement work needs to better match the priorities of the community members we purport to serve. To do that, we need to hear what those community members are seeking in order to move closer to their own liberation. Too often, higher education actions in the community are coordinated with long-standing nonprofit organizations whose staff live far outside the community, leading to limited trust from community members in the organization and its initiatives. This is an all-too-familiar experience of marginalized communities, where work is done for or to them instead of done with or by them (Mitchell, 2022).

Higher education community engagement work should also seek to repair. The past three years have revealed much about the costs of oppression in our society. In a June 2020 *New Yorker* interview, civil rights lawyer Bryan Stevenson pointed to society's inability to understand present-day issues surrounding racial injustice "without understanding the persistent refusal to view Black people as equals" (Chotiner, 2020). His insight points to the losses, the struggle, and the precarity faced by Black, Indigenous, and other people of color.

By shaping our community engagement work as also reparative, we are hopeful that we in higher education can challenge the skepticism that sees community engagement as extractive through the possibility of community.

As college and university educators, we can demonstrate our care by prioritizing the work that the community names as necessary and by sustaining our efforts in the community until we meet the emancipatory aims identified by community members. We should frame those concerns named by the residents that we attempt to address through community engagement as policy failures, rather than as individual deficits, and work toward system-level responses that may generate needed change (Mitchell, 2022), the emancipatory aims identified by community members.

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# Opportunities, Barriers, and Building a Path to a Graduate Degree for Historically Marginalized Students

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**A**ccess to higher education for historically marginalized<sup>1</sup> students is an ongoing issue in the United States. The following chapter focuses on why graduate students at UNC Charlotte and in the United States are less diverse than the rest of the population and what graduate programs can do to open up more opportunities for the historically marginalized to complete their graduate education. First, we use narratives to illustrate what advantages and disadvantages are between different students' personal experiences in the application process, a critical part of access. It is not a level playing field in the admissions process based on student characteristics and experiences. We discuss how universities and colleges can reduce barriers. We then profile national information and the characteristics of the University of

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1. We understand that we are living in a time where appropriate language is constantly evolving, and we use the term “historically marginalized” to reflect groups who have long endured structural, cultural, and institutional barriers to gaining access to graduate education. There is no single term that can capture the pain from a lifetime of micro-aggressions, prejudice, and discrimination. This chapter is geared toward efforts related to Black or African American students in graduate programs (certificates, master’s degrees, or doctoral degrees). Black or African American students, in this context, fit under the definition of historically marginalized.

North Carolina at Charlotte's graduate programs and offer information about recruiting graduate students from historically Black colleges and offer suggestions to graduate professionals. We conclude with discussing the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' Graduate Recruitment and Success working group's efforts to brainstorm to start addressing these issues in graduate education. First, to introduce the reader to different experiences, we begin with two fictional student narratives to provide context for this chapter.

## Scenario 1<sup>2</sup>

*Since Ellie was little, she wanted to be just like her mother who was a professor at a local college. Her mother also wrote award-winning short stories. Ellie's family was of English descent and could trace their relatives back to 1790. Unlike most families, her family was always engaged in academic debates at the dinner table. Ellie attended the top private school in the region. When Ellie was a freshman in high school, she was eligible to take the PSAT. She did well, and her parents encouraged her to take all of the Advanced Placement exams available at her high school. Upon her junior year, she went on the "tour" and visited several colleges around the country. She was accepted at her top three choices. Her parents saved \$70,000 for her education and paid for her degree. Just like her search for her undergraduate degree, she started planning and looking at schools for a graduate degree her junior year in college. She was fast-tracked into an early entry graduate program<sup>3</sup> because of all the college credit she earned in high school from completing four Advance Placement tests. She was already accepted to graduate school upon graduation. She received a position as a teaching assistant and a partial scholarship upon her full entry in the program because the department did not want her to transfer to another graduate school. In fact, one faculty member mentioned several times that they "should keep her a secret and not let another program steal her away." Her graduate school paid her tuition, fees, and health insurance plus a small stipend. Her parents agreed to cover her remaining living expenses. She had no prior debt. In fact, she had already completed the eligible internship requirements.*

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2. All stories are fictional. They are combinations of different graduate student experiences.

3. Early entry programs typically allow undergraduate juniors and seniors to start taking graduate courses that double count for both programs.

## Scenario 2

*Kameran grew up in a large city and was raised by his grandmother who worked part-time at the local grocery store. Kameran's family had come from a long line of African American sharecroppers in the South. In school, Kameran frequently got into trouble because he was academically gifted yet was never really challenged at school. Although interested in the state university, his grandmother told him he would likely never be able to afford to go to college. She suggested his junior year he take the GED and start working full-time because they needed money. Around this time, a classmate encouraged him to apply to a local junior college where he was planning to go. He told Kameran that he should at least take an Advanced Placement course or two, but Kameran did not have the money for the test. Kameran was accepted to attend a 4-year regional college part-time and excelled, even as he took 6 years to finish in order to help his family. It was hard to make connections as a part-time student, living off campus and being unable to join extracurricular activities. Despite these challenges, he graduated magna cum laude. He started filling out applications for the GRE, but he struggled to pay the fees. A year later, he saved enough money to apply but had to wait until the semester had almost started because of an administrative issue getting an official transcript from the community college. All of the available funding was awarded back in April, and his application would not be completed until August. If he waited another semester, the cost of the GRE test was slated to increase. It was also a struggle to get letters of recommendation from anyone but work supervisors since he did not get a chance to really get to know his professors. He also had accumulated about \$35,000 in student loans as an undergraduate.*

### Lessons From Narratives

As the two narratives demonstrate, there is inequity between applicants prior to the final graduate program admissions process. In this chapter, we ask: *What can higher education professionals do to address these inequities and encourage more pathways to graduate school?* Reading through both narratives, it is telling to compare and contrast the different ways students were prepared to attend graduate school. Notice that each student's path looks very different depending on their environment, even if they were both similar in their level of intelligence.

The best way to understand a student's perspective is to listen to their lived experiences and think about the barriers they may have faced along the way. Then consider all of the potential students that were unsuccessful in any of the steps it took to get in the applicant pool, let alone succeed in graduate school. While both students were bright and loved learning, their environment, responsibilities, and race also shaped their opportunity to receive a quality education and preparation. Notice the stark differences between high school and undergraduate experiences. Ellie's demonstrates someone who has a good understanding of the application process having a mother with a Ph.D. and being in an upper-middle-class White family.

Most students entering graduate school at a public institution are not like Ellie. They are more like Kameran, who had accumulated \$35,000 in debt from his undergraduate education. Also, Ellie attended the best schools, took advantage of all of the advanced courses in school, and double-counted three courses through the early entry option. She was able to transition to graduate school rather effortlessly with already a semester of tuition and expenses paid. Kameran did not know about the possibility of starting a graduate program as an undergraduate (like UNC Charlotte's early entry program), so there was no opportunity to have a full semester of coursework, tuition, and expenses. Also, he would likely incur an additional \$25,000 in student loan debt, starting his career with a \$60,000-plus-interest loan. Part of this is because he was unable to apply early to be competitive for scholarships and a fully funded teaching assistant position due to hardships in the application process itself.

There are lessons here that those involved in the graduate recruitment and admissions process should pay attention to. In making changes to the admissions policies, consider the end user first, the student. Who is the audience? What is it like to be in the shoes of students like Kameran? There are often barriers in the process that systematically reduce access for historically marginalized students. In particular, implementing a new fee, increasing application costs, and adding additional requirements for graduate professionals all limit access.

### **National Statistics in Graduate Program Recipient Diversity**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the percentage of master's degree students still demonstrates that White students

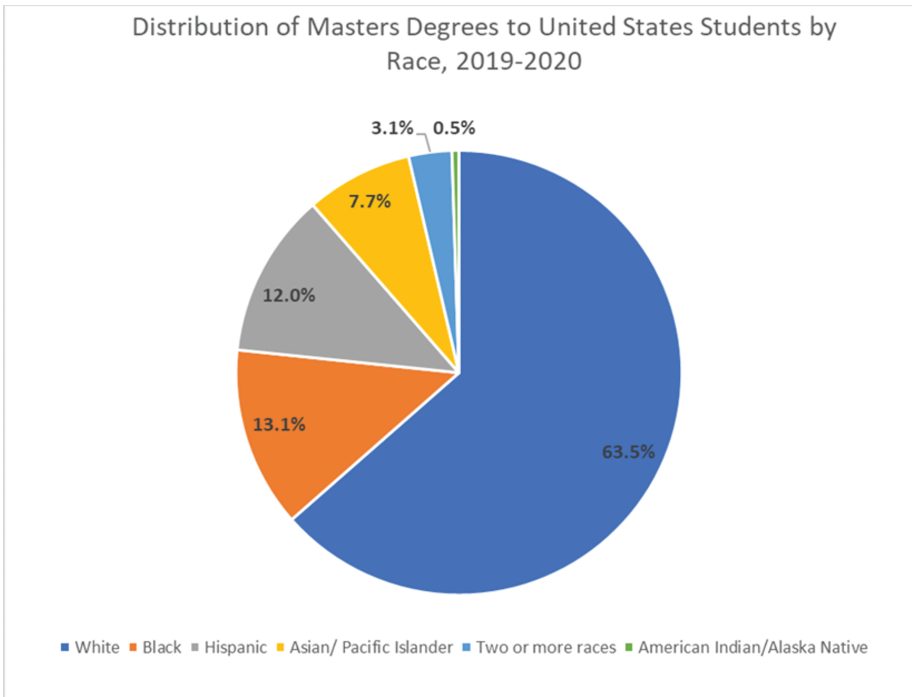


Figure 1. Distribution of Master's Degrees to United States by Race, 2019–2020

made up over 63% of all students in 2019–2020. While this is an increase in historically marginalized groups, it still does not mirror the diversity of the U.S. population. As demonstrated in Figure 1, White students went from making up about 90% of all master's degree students in 1976–1977 to about 63.5% over the last 43 years. Black master's students are the second largest category at 13.1%, followed closely by Hispanic students at 12.0%, Asian/Pacific Islander students at 7.7%, two or more races at 3.1%, and American Indian/Alaska Native students as the smallest group at 0.5%.

Figure 2 demonstrates how people receiving master's degrees in the United States have become more racially diverse since 1980, although there is still room for improvement. Also note Hispanic students have been increasing, while the number of Black students has seen a recent decline.

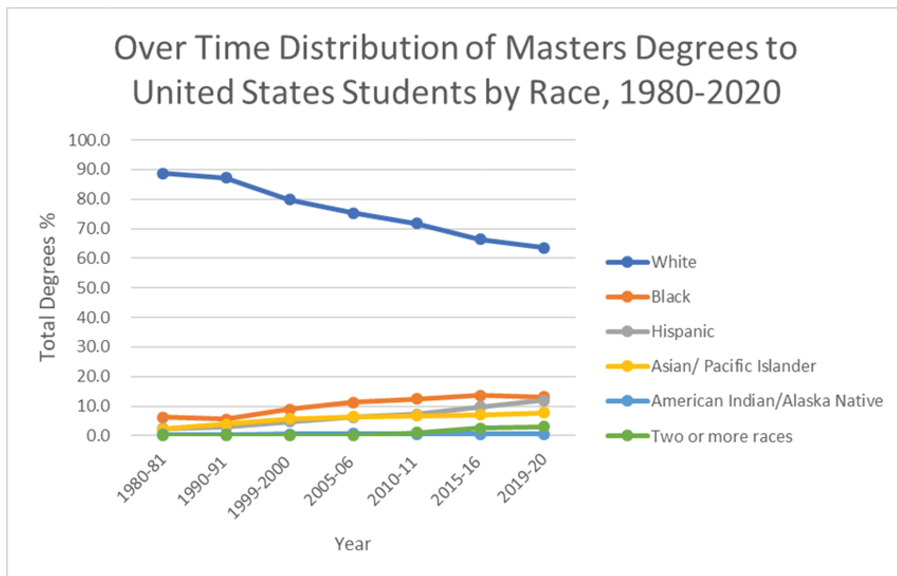


Figure 2. Over Time Distribution of Master's Degrees to United States by Race 1980–2020  
 Source: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20\\_323.20.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_323.20.asp) 2019-2020

## The Dynamics of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

In 2000, the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) had approximately 20 graduate programs (UNC Charlotte Graduate School, 2000). In the last 20 years, CLAS has expanded their graduate program offerings to nearly 50. It remains the college with the largest graduate program offerings in the entire university. Today, CLAS is home to 18 graduate certificates, 23 master's degrees, and 8 research-based doctoral degrees in the areas of humanities, interdisciplinary studies, and the social and natural sciences. Graduate enrollment in the college has remained at or near 800 students over the last few years with increases during the Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 COVID-19 years. Within the last 10 years, we enrolled 275–325 doctoral and 434–580 master's students each year.

In addition to its graduate population, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences enrolls approximately 7,332 undergraduates, including 919 Hispanic students, 1,529 Black or African American students, 20 American Indian students, 5 Pacific Islander students, and 409 students identifying as two or more races. Currently, our graduate programs within the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences enroll approximately 74%

of North Carolina residents. There may be several explanations for this tendency (including, but not limited to, funding packages), but with 46 4-year institutions, including 10 accredited Historically Black Colleges and Universities, there is little doubt that the state of North Carolina has viable options to recruit traditionally marginalized students to feed into our graduate programs. This matter extends beyond the need for our graduate programs to be enriched with a more diverse student base because it has long implications for the makeup of faculty at institutions of higher education.

### **The Professoriate in CLAS for Graduate Education**

Tenured faculty are the members closely aligned with graduate education. The percentage of White tenured faculty was 76% in 2021, and there were only 18 (7.1%) Black or African American tenured faculty in UNCC's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences in 2021. While the percentage of White tenured faculty was almost in exact alignment with the census's White alone population, the percentage of Black or African American tenured faculty is nearly half of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). The lack of a representative faculty may not come as much of a surprise; however, it makes a greater case for graduate programs to improve diversity because it directly impacts the overall demographics in the field of academia.

### **Demographics: How the Graduate Student Reflects the Professoriate**

The path to the professoriate is by way of graduate school. Therefore, lack of recruitment, enrollment, or retention contributes to the issue of historically marginalized groups being represented as professors. So then comes the question of how do we resolve the pipeline issue of having more historically marginalized groups represented in the field of academia? This is the very reason why not only recruitment of this population is dire, but also ensuring this population of students is supported through degree completion in meaningful ways. It's difficult to say it any better than Vicente M. Lechuga (2011) in their piece, "Faculty–Graduate Student Mentoring Relationships: Mentors' Perceived Roles and Responsibilities":

There is general consensus among scholars that faculty–graduate student mentoring relationships are a significant aspect of the graduate education



experience that foster student success (Heinrich 1995; Patton 2009; Patton and Harper 2003). Such relationships benefit students in numerous ways, which include increased employment opportunities (Bova 2000; Cameron 1978), development of professional skills (Bova and Phillips 1984), and professional growth (Harris and Brewer 1986), among others. (2011, p. 757)

Therefore, next we discuss how admissions to graduate school are also a part of achieving a diverse set of faculty who will train and mentor the next generation of academics and practitioners in each field.

## **Who or What Decides Who Is Going to Graduate School: Structural and Financial Barriers**

### **Graduate Student Debt**

Encouraging historically marginalized students to enroll in college is also about affordability. For many, financial hardship can discourage capable students from applying and enrolling. For graduate school, the disadvantages are exacerbated by the accumulated debt from their undergraduate degree. The American Council on Education reports that Black or African American students are more likely to take out loans than other ethnic groups pursuing similar degree types and borrow larger amounts. Economic differences in pre-college and undergraduate circumstances and post college earnings also lead to an increase in the default on student loans (Baum, 2022).

On the national level, the Institute for College Access and Success (2019) reported that the average debt of graduating seniors was \$12,750 in 1995. In 2017–2018, the average rose to about \$29,000 (Institute for College Access and Success, 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the most recent estimate in 2022 is that undergraduate student loan debt balance is \$36,635. It climbs to an average debt among master's degree holders to \$71,287. The average debt among Ph.D. holders is \$159,625. Only 14.3% of the average graduate student debt is from the borrower's undergraduate study (NCES, 2022). Since about three-quarters of undergraduates and graduates nationally attend public college institutions, state-level budget cuts have been the main factor in the rise of student debt (Institute for College Access and Success, 2019).

Master's degree programs in particular cost more than undergraduate degrees but are less likely to have financial assistance and scholarships. Doctoral

programs, where a much larger number of students are funded, often have the ability to attract more historically marginalized students. Students' financial options for master's degrees are typically limited to student loans or assistantships. Assistantship funding is often a much smaller percentage of the students enrolled and may not pay more than a stipend that does not include all or a portion of the student's tuition. Many master's degree programs may only have very limited or no funding for assistantships, especially at smaller state universities.

At relatively newer public universities like UNC Charlotte, there are also fewer endowments, which tend to be smaller amounts and thus mean fewer scholarships are available to graduate students. They are also in smaller amounts because they have not been around long enough to accumulate large amounts of interest. This will impact the ability of all activities and how competitive the university is compared to others, especially in attracting and competing for historically marginalized students.

### How the Admissions Process Impacts Student Access and Applicant Diversity

Application expenses go well beyond the one-time fee charged. Schools should consider reducing or waiving application fees, nonrefundable deposits, and the number of application materials required. Graduate programs should focus on retrieving only important and relevant information for the program committee that reviews the applications. Enabling ongoing admissions or multiple admission points during the year can increase access. It is also likely that marginalized students are more likely to need more time and flexibility to plan to pay not just the application fee, but also the cost of the required documentation to apply. At UNC Charlotte, it costs a domestic student \$75 to fill out an application. Additional costs associated with applying include transcripts, which can range between \$5 and \$14.99 per transcript, and if a program requires testing such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), that costs a whopping \$205. When a graduate program requires testing, this means it costs a student a total of \$290 to even be considered for admission. This all adds up for students, like Kameran, who may have some disadvantages from the start.

If a student applies and is accepted, but needs to delay enrollment for a semester, the student is required to complete the application process over again, obtain all of the documents, and pay another \$75. There is no leave of

absence for first-semester students even if there is a sick relative or medical issue. This means the student must apply again and incur another \$75 cost and any other expenses, depending on the program requirements. This is why it is so important for the admission professionals and program directors/coordinators to be mindful of the students who are applying and the financial barriers, not just in terms of tuition but all of the application costs, if the goal is to attract a diverse pool of applicants. It should not be assumed that all students come to the admissions process itself equally.

### Costs Associated With Applying to a Graduate Program

- Application fee for domestic students: \$75
- GRE (if required): \$205
- Official transcript from undergraduate or prior institution: \$5–\$14.99

If a program requires the GRE, it costs approximately \$290 for a student to even be considered for admission—not knowing if they will be accepted.

Aside from the financial costs, there are additional costs associated with applying for graduate school. It takes time to put the application materials together and many financially challenged students are working to contribute to their family household. Family income is an important predictor of who applies to graduate school. Students with higher family incomes apply to and graduate from master's degrees at higher rates than their lower-income counterparts according to the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. Also, graduation rates from master's degree programs are about 61% lower than doctoral programs (National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, 2017).

### Graduate Admission Decisions

Unlike undergraduate admissions, graduate admission decisions are largely decentralized where who gets accepted to a graduate program is largely decided by faculty within the specific program. But as the previous section demonstrates, there are a lot of barriers that can hinder a student's ability to even get to be a part of the admissions committee decisions. The graduate school's role in admissions is primarily to serve as a check to ensure that applications are complete and all requirements have been met (Michel et al., 2019), however, they hold a lot of decision-making ability on the structural and financial barriers an applicant faces leading up to the admission decisions. Faculty, on the other hand, have significant influence over how excellence is defined and

which “excellent” students are getting into their program and prioritized for funding. As Posselt (2014) puts it, “Professors play an under-examined role as gatekeepers, and their understandings of merit have significant implications for racial equity and diversity in graduate education and the professoriate.”

There have historically been three strong determinants of access to graduate education: college grades, GRE scores, and the reputation of the undergraduate institution attended (Posselt, 2016). Much of this has been shaped through the social construction of merit in making decisions in the graduate space. As it is common for faculty members to make the imperative decision on who gets accepted into their program as well as who gets employment as an assistantship with a financial package, faculty can take these steps further to address disparities that negatively impact historically marginalized students. In the next section you will find some direct recommendations on what programs can do to address these disparities.

## Tips for Graduate Professionals Addressing Disparities in the Admissions Process

How can the university and faculty help ease financial barriers in the admissions process and encourage more Black students to enroll? Below are some suggestions to consider when creating and adjusting standards.

- Create flexible deadlines to maximize application opportunities.
- Have an additional deadline to consider awarding some of assistantships and scholarships to those who do not apply prior to “signing day” in April.
- Increase the number of admission cycles. The more the better. Not everyone follows the same timeline.
- Consider GRE/GMAT waivers or an alternative such as an essay. Use GRE/GMAT tests or alternatives as one of many criteria for consideration.
- Communicate with the prospective student about missing materials. Consider they may not know how to go about obtaining the necessary materials.
- Teach undergraduate students *how* to ask for letters of recommendation from professors.
- Offer programs that enable students to begin graduate school as an undergraduate. A model that grants students the ability to double-count classes towards both programs. Communicate the benefits and

opportunities of these programs to undergraduates early and often. At UNC Charlotte, our program is called early entry.

- Diversify your graduate admissions committee.

Finally, when making any changes in the admissions and enrollment process, think about the end user. Will changes benefit or harm Black students more than others? What else can be done to mitigate this? These important questions need to be addressed at a programmatic level before the consideration of inviting historically marginalized students into our graduate programs.

## **Increasing the Number of Black Graduate Students—Where Are Our Opportunities?**

### Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

In the early 19th century, Black students and people of African descent were not welcome to enroll at institutions of higher education. In many cases in southern states, Black Americans were actually prohibited from the pursuit of an education (*A History of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 2022*). As a result, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created to grant people of African descent access to undergraduate and graduate levels of educational opportunities (*History of HBCUs, 2022*).

North Carolina is home to 10 accredited HBCUs, including Shaw University, the oldest HBCU in the South. Although Alabama has the highest number of HBCUs at 14 (*By the Numbers, 2021*), North Carolina is the national leader in the enrollment of Black undergraduate students at an HBCU, including the largest HBCU in enrollment (North Carolina A&T) with over 13,000 students in Fall 2021 alone (Timmons, 2021). See Table 1. With the right funding and support for these students, these are viable options for building partnerships to have pipelines into our master's and doctoral programs.

Many HBCUs do not have graduate program offerings or many options for students to choose from. This provides UNC Charlotte with a great opportunity to enable Black students to take their education higher through our master's and doctoral programs. We must work to build meaningful relationships with our fellow HBCUs to foster an environment of belonging and safety for the HBCU students it recruits.

Table 1. Accredited HBCUs in North Carolina, 2021

HBCU	Total Enrollment
Bennett	233
Elizabeth City State	2,500
Fayetteville	6,728
Johnson C. Smith	1,306
Livingstone	845
NC A & T	13,322
NC Central	8,207
Shaw	1,283
St. Augustine's	1,110
Winston-Salem State	5,226

## UNC Charlotte College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Undergraduates

UNC Charlotte has a robust undergraduate population that most recently hit an enrollment of 24,175 students in Fall 2020. Within the university, the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) has approximately 7,300 undergraduate majors, which gives us a substantial opportunity to offer graduate degrees to our very own undergraduate population. It is important, though, to note the demographic differences between our graduates and undergraduates to understand where there are gaps for historically marginalized students. While the average undergraduate percentage of Black or African American is 21.5% (Fall 2017–Fall 2021), only 11.2% make up the population in our graduate programs in CLAS. We must work to understand why this is occurring and reflect on some of our processes, including creating an environment where students feel like they belong in graduate school and support them through graduation.

## Retention and Student Success

It is one thing to work to recruit historically marginalized students to our institution, but it is, arguably, most important to support the students who are here

and in our programs. What use is it to recruit students and put them through a rigorous admissions process if we aren't going to support them through to graduation?

In higher education, we tend to have our own language and even use what feels like 54,832,549 different acronyms to explain various things on and off campus—like PI (principal investigator), CV (curriculum vitae, which is essentially an academic résumé), FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), or RA, which can actually stand for two very different things (research assistant *or* resident advisor). Some of these terminologies become so ingrained in those that work in higher education, we often forget that these may not be familiar to students, particularly those who are the first in their families to go to college. We must peel back the layers and unfold the structural unfamiliarity that make our institution intimidating. We must also offer a welcoming community, including the vital role of the mentor–mentee relationship between faculty and their students.

A significant amount of student success can be placed on the importance of the faculty–student mentoring relationships in the graduate student experience (Lechuga, 2011). But how do faculty members learn to become mentors? And, more importantly, what does it take to be a good mentor? There is little training for faculty who are working with graduate students. Fortunately, the Graduate School does offer mentor training to faculty based on the practices of the Center for Improved Mentoring Experiences in Research (CIMER). This training, though, is voluntary and not required for graduate faculty to serve as mentors to students. As we are also talking about supporting students who have traditionally been racially marginalized, we must also consider what the mentor training programs should look like to best support this group of students. Which you will see as one of the primary focus areas of the Graduate Recruitment and Student Success Working Group.

## **The Graduate Recruitment and Success Working Group**

The Graduate Recruitment and Success Working Group in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at UNC Charlotte organized to focus on improving experiences and outcomes for historically marginalized students. The working group was composed of 17 members that included 5 full professors,

5 assistant professors, 2 associate professors, 2 lecturers, 2 administrators, and 1 staff member. The group met on a monthly basis to discuss issues, generate ideas, and work toward improving the opportunities for Black students.

The working group set several goals for recruitment and admissions. The first goal was to enhance recruitment efforts and address admission biases in our graduate programs. This included reaching out to undergraduate students early during their undergraduate educational journey. Professors should explain what it means to be a graduate student in orientation and one-on-one advising meetings.

A second goal is to develop strategies to recruit undergraduate students from HBCUs. The working group plans to find ways to foster meaningful relationships between faculty and students at HBCUs and UNC Charlotte. In particular, the group would create and host campus tours appropriate to the graduate program, provide summer internships, and pay the application fee for visiting HBCU students. The working group also set a goal to invite HBCU faculty to UNC Charlotte events and offer opportunities that provide benefits for them (for example, paying for accommodations and travel). Finally, the group set a goal of increasing funding opportunities to address the unequal burden of debt for Black students in graduate school.

To improve graduate student success and retention, a couple goals were developed. First, provide graduate students with access to on-boarding-related training material, high-quality mentoring, research training, professional development, and well-being.

Goals:

1. Conduct Focus Groups
  - a. Conduct separate focus groups for racially marginalized students. Identify barriers and facilitators that impact the success of graduate students of color specifically at the University at North Carolina at Charlotte.
  - b. Hold graduate *faculty* focus groups with the goal of learning how to better support marginalized graduate students.
2. Develop Mentorship Training Programs
  - a. Use findings from focus groups to develop a cohort-style mentorship program for marginalized graduate students.



- b. Use findings from focus groups in conjunction with training materials from existing workshops to develop a mentorship program for faculty supporting marginalized graduate students.
3. Find and apply to available funding initiatives, including the university's Inclusive Excellence Grants.

## Challenges Faced by the Working Group

The working group faced several challenges that should be noted for future endeavors. The first challenge was to overcome was something as simple as scheduling meetings. Particularly when you have large groups of faculty members where availability is heavily inconsistent, trying to get one cohesive meeting was a barrier. Our solution was to offer two separate meetings to increase attendance. Although this allowed for more flexibility in availability, this presented yet another challenge—trying to ensure information wasn't lost from one group to the next.

The second challenge was that members shifted from one academic year to another. Several members left the group and others joined. It became difficult to keep moving forward with new people joining who needed to be clued in on the previous efforts. In hindsight, it would have been beneficial to have a comprehensive outline and detailed meeting minutes of all that was covered in the prior academic year to ensure we continued momentum forward on moving toward taking action.

The third challenge was to move the group from brainstorming mode to taking action. With a group of intellectual individuals with very good ideas, it was frustrating when major changes at the university level often derailed the group. Some of this occurred because of timing. The race and social justice working groups were created in Spring 2021 after an advocate was identified to lead the college in the important efforts surrounding race and social justice. At this time, we were still in the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic, Zoom was the primary meeting space, the university was undergoing administration changes at the highest levels, and significant policy changes related to graduate education were taking place, in particular impacting funding for students and adopting a new admissions software. It was tempting to discuss these issues and discuss how they would affect students. Separate platforms for discussion and a few very dedicated members who were motivated to make impact enabled the group to stay on task and move forward.

## **Best Practices From Our Graduate Programs: It's Time to Implement**

In addition to the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences working groups, individual graduate programs are also contributing efforts related to race and social justice. Below you will see a variety of ways in which our graduate programs are tackling relationship building with partner institutions, changing aspects of the admissions process, reducing financial barriers, and integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into curriculum.

### **HBCUs, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Historically Minority Institutions**

There are many things individual programs and the institution can do to recruit more historically marginalized students into their programs. In the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at UNC Charlotte, it has become a priority to develop meaningful outreach efforts to HBCUs, Hispanic-serving institutions, and historically minority institutions. Fortunately, North Carolina has many of these types of institutions to foster relationships with. The emphasis here is to have thoughtful and intentional outreach to these institutions and find ways in which you have something to offer to benefit them throughout the relationship. A first step CLAS has taken is to identify contacts at these institutions to connect with. Some programs have already leveraged these contacts to invite the HBCU faculty to campus events that provide direct benefits. More specifically, UNC Charlotte had National Science Foundation (NSF) program directors come to campus for a roundtable discussion about research opportunities. Others are working to identify institutions to build relationships with in order to create pipelines as many HBCUs do not have robust graduate program offerings. It is important to utilize these contacts in meaningful ways that do not place additional burden on HBCUs and other historically minority institutions.

### **Local Community Colleges and Universities**

Many of our graduate programs are working to offer information sessions and build relationships with local community colleges and universities in order to bridge any culture gap. There is a goal to create an inclusive environment that enables all students to feel as though they belong. This may mean getting students involved in opportunities that may lead to a graduate degree,

or advising and mentoring them throughout their undergraduate journey to make graduate education feel more familiar. One of the most imperative objectives of successfully bridging the gap between local community colleges and universities is to meet the students where they are at.

### Make Necessary Changes in Admissions

As mentioned earlier, it can cost approximately \$290 for a student to be considered for admission to a graduate program. A significant amount of this cost is associated with the GRE, which is currently \$205. A step many graduate programs have taken to improve access to a graduate degree has been to remove the GRE requirement. This is not only a \$205 savings for the applicant, but the GRE has a long history of being biased against marginalized groups. This assessment was first administered for the elites at Ivy League schools such as Harvard, Brown, Princeton, and Yale. In lieu of the GRE, many programs are utilizing essay questions to ask students about inclusivity and provide an example of how they have promoted diversity or inclusiveness.

### Integrating DEI Into Curriculum

Many of the faculty within CLAS have integrated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) articles, discussions, and content into each course. It is imperative that these are relevant to the field or curriculum and to ensure they are adopted into core classes to ensure all students within the graduate program are exposed to them. It is a priority to build a community of kindness, respect, belonging, and safety.

### Reduce Financial Barriers

We already mentioned how the GRE can be a significant barrier in the application process to graduate school. It is also important to consider ways to reduce financial burden once students are in a program. One method that the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences has been successful at is to advocate for larger financial support for our graduate students (assistantships, grants and scholarships, tuition and fee support). In the 2022–2023 academic year, many master's programs saw increases in both stipend and tuition support for assistantships. We created baseline compensations that were funded by the college and some by the Graduate School:

- Master's: \$14,000 stipend plus in-state tuition

- Doctoral: \$18,500 stipend, full tuition support, health insurance and some fees

For some of our graduate programs, these are huge financial changes as it was not uncommon for students to have a \$9,000 stipend without any tuition support. The increase currently equates to about a \$9,337 a year raise.

Another way to break down financial barriers is through the early entry program where students can begin a graduate program while they are still finishing their bachelor's degree. Through entering the early entry program, students pay less for their classes and are able to count certain courses toward both undergraduate and graduate degrees. It provides a great opportunity to help reduce the financial burden that can come with acquiring college degrees. One of the most successful ways that graduate programs can spread awareness about the early entry program is by visiting undergraduate classes. Faculty must ensure that they remain intentional in encouraging historically marginalized students to apply to the program.

## Conclusion

This chapter explored why access to graduate education is still an issue for marginalized students in the United States, including the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. It gives in-depth insights into two different stories of two very different pathways to the graduate school prior to the admissions decision process. Students do not start out with the same resources and experiences from childhood to completing their undergraduate degree. Recognizing and understanding the financial, institutional, educational, and other barriers to applicants is essential to improve the overall graduate program diversity, but there is a long way to go in improving the success just to get to the graduate application and admissions decisions. The race and social justice working groups discussed in the second part of the chapter offer ideas about best practices from across the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences with the promise of making inroads in improving access for historically marginalized groups in the future. Future research is needed to continue searching for more solutions.

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## Undergraduate Student Success

### Incorporating Race and Social Justice Issues Into Pedagogy

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“**T**here is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process” (Shaull, 1981, p. 15). And, thus, ends the foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the critical book by the internationally renowned scholar and educator Paulo Freire (1981) that outlines the utilization of education as a tool for social justice. What we say and do as faculty matters, and what we include, or exclude, from our teaching has an impact on our students—all students, not just those whom we categorize as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC), disenfranchised, or marginalized (Dillon & Stines, 1996; Torregosa et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2020). Students can experience alienation and disconnection when faculty do not take the time to address or include experiences that they find relevant. For example, the racial and social injustice exemplified by the murder of George Floyd was a pivotal moment, both nationally and internationally. To have an instructor engage in teaching as if their discipline occurs in a vacuum is disingenuous and disrespectful of the historical and, as demonstrated with Mr. Floyd’s murder, contemporary context of the lived experiences of people of African ancestry in the United States and throughout the African diaspora.

Taking the time to acknowledge events that impact our society and our world not only humanizes the instructor, but it allows students to feel “seen” and, therefore, heard. As Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory reflects, students are affected by their environment, which includes teachers.

Although Bronfenbrenner's work focuses on early childhood development, research has shown that his theory also applies to young adults who bring with them to college their socially constructed identities (Eliason & Turalba, 2019; see also Jackson et al., 2013; Renn, 2003).

Following Freire's emphasis on the importance of education as an instrument for societal transformation, in this chapter we examine the incorporation of race and social justice into pedagogy. We begin the first section of this chapter with a brief summary of the historical and contemporary context of race and social issues faced by Black Americans, a review of the demographics of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte), which is then used to frame why the inclusion of race and social justice issues is critical for the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) as well as across the entire university and other institutions of higher education. The impetus that drives our focus on and framing of this issue is the desire to serve our students. As faculty, we are committed to preparing our students to be educated and transformative citizens. To do so includes that we acknowledge and apply a critical understanding of our local, national, and global context, which includes addressing issues of race and social justice in our pedagogy.

In the following section, we examine the intention we collectively brought to this undertaking and discuss our approach to unpacking this effort, including the organization and challenges of the work. In the final section, we outline the current resources that exist at UNC Charlotte to support faculty's inclusion of race and social justice issues in their pedagogy, where there's room for improvement, and how comparable institutions approach this effort. We share research-based best practices and provide examples of faculty that successfully address these issues in their teaching. Collectively, we hope that this work inspires each of us to consider how we can integrate race and social justice issues in our pedagogy in ways that are insightful, meaningful, and inclusive for our students and encourages them to contribute to the creation of a more equitable world.

## **Background: Black Americans and Higher Education**

Research on both the exclusion and subsequent inclusion of Black Americans in educational institutions has a long history in the United States. In seminal works, scholars have examined the experiences of Black Americans in the

pursuit of education (Butchart, 2010; see also Davis, 2011; Du Bois, 1924/2009; Moss, 2009; Douglas, 2005; Anderson, 1988; Woodson, 1933/1977). These and other works outline the trajectory of the education of Black Americans from the period of African enslavement to the present day.

Relevant to the focus of this chapter, scholars have also examined the experiences of Black Americans specific to higher education attainment (Dancy et al., 2018; Bracey, 2017; Watkins, 2001; Clewell & Anderson, 1995). Du Bois (1924/2009), Woodson (1933/1977), and Henry (1998) wrote at length about the struggle Black Americans endured in their pursuit of higher education. Scholars continue to indicate that, despite the apparent and significant changes, Black Americans continue to face persistent challenges in navigating higher education, including the disproportionate access to institutions with strong resources (Baber, 2015), the perpetual subjection to racial micro-aggressions, persistent inequity in access, affordability, and attainment, and students' sense of alienation and isolation (Baber, 2015; Huber & Solorzano, 2015; Naylor et al., 2015; Page, 2020a; Page, 2020b; Morales, 2021).

## Using Race and Social Justice Pedagogy to Facilitate Black Students' Learning

Page argues that it is the task of teachers, among others, to ensure that students have positive outcomes, and institutions of higher education “should be a place of progression and inclusion while serving as a foundation for every single student to have success at learning and obtaining their degrees” (2020a, p. 50). Page also asserts that, in addition to the institutional culture, the structure and operation of classrooms are important to student learning, as are teachers, who are pivotal to classroom culture; the systemic, institutional, and classroom cultures impact Black learners, and collective attention to all three elements are necessary to improve the academic outcomes of Black students. This leads to the question: *What contribution can teachers in institutions of higher education make to facilitate and improve the academic persistence and attainment of Black students (and, by extension, all students)?*

One way to address some of the challenges faced by Black students in higher education classrooms is for teachers to include race and social justice issues in their pedagogy. According to Adams and Love (2010), a framework of social justice education acknowledges and includes analyses domination

and subordination at different societal, institutional, and interpersonal levels, and analyzes how structures of domination and subordination present in the social and cultural differences in society are reproduced in the classroom. This approach to teaching provides for confrontation and analysis of the inequities that result from intersecting identities, and thereby gives a voice and a seat at the table to students who otherwise experience alienation in higher education settings. It also increases the capacity of all students to live and work in a diverse society and to become advocates for and contributors to the creation of more just societies (DeMeulenaere & Cann, 2013; Johnson, M., 2015; Johnson, D. D., 2020).

Across disciplines, race and social justice education can supply students with the ability to both understand and challenge systems of oppression and to advance race and social equity in society (Harbin et al., 2019). Research supports approaches to teaching that centralize race and social justice and utilize transformative pedagogies to develop critical thinking and awareness among students, as well as teachers, concerning historic and current social issues (Hooks, 1994, 2003; Adams & Love, 2010; Agartan & Hartwiger, 2020; Aktaş, 2021; Pérez, 2022; Veri et al., 2022). The inclusion of race and social justice issues in pedagogy informs and strengthens the commitment of higher education institutions to graduate students with an understanding of the social and cultural context in which they live. This pedagogical approach can also instill in students the ability, and willingness, to apply critical thinking and analysis to the development of solutions to the persistent challenges they will encounter at local, national, and global levels of community. Pedagogy, as succinctly stated by Hooks, can be powerful in its impact:

Transformative pedagogical chain reactions occur when professors expose students to critical issues and inspire them to act to transform those around them, their communities, and society in general. This process should lead to the exponential growth of transformative consciousness and resistance beyond classrooms and into communities and society in general. (2009, p. 28)

To help contextualize the best practices for the inclusion of race and social justice issues in higher education pedagogy, in the next section we explore the

demographics of students at UNC Charlotte, which underscores the critical need to address the issues faced by all students, in general, and by Black students, in particular.

## The Demographics of Students at UNC Charlotte and in CLAS

As diversity increases on college campuses, faculty must adjust to teaching diverse students, and UNC Charlotte's campus is no exception. The demographic data displayed in Table 1, acquired from UNC Charlotte's Office of Institutional Research, show that as of Spring 2022, the total enrollment is approximately 28,036 students. Of the total enrollment, 22,191 are undergraduates and 5,845 are graduate students. Women compose 47% of the full-time UNC Charlotte undergraduate population, while men represent 53%.

UNC Charlotte achieved a College Factual diversity rank of 460 out of 3,514 total schools in the ranking. A high overall ranking means this school is considered quite diverse among all factors: student race/ethnicity, age, gender, and location. UNC Charlotte is ranked 777 out of 3,790 when it comes to the racial/ethnic diversity of the students. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of UNC Charlotte's demographic data.

CLAS enrollment data for Spring 2022, also acquired from the Office of Institutional Research, is shown in Table 2 and Figure 2. There are a total of 7,422 students in CLAS. Of this total, 6,619 are undergraduates and 803 are graduate students.

The foregoing data illustrate that, in Spring 2022, Black students were approximately 17% of UNC Charlotte's total undergraduate enrollment and represented about 19% of the undergraduate enrollment in CLAS. Black students represent the highest number and corresponding percentage of students of color in both UNC Charlotte and CLAS. The percentage of Black students enrolled at UNC Charlotte and in CLAS underscores the importance of addressing race and social justice issues since, as referenced in the research cited in the previous section, inclusion of these topics in pedagogy is relevant to and important for the academic attainment of Black students and, parenthetically, of all students.

The following section outlines the organization of our effort and the challenges we faced in undertaking this work.

Table 1. UNC Charlotte Undergraduate Enrollment, Spring 2022

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students
White	52% (11,544)
Black or African American	17% (3,667)
Hispanic	13% (2,871)
Asian	9% (2,076)
Multi-Ethnic	5% (1,057)
International	2% (486)
Unknown	1% (416)
American Indian	< 1% (60)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	< 1% (14)

Reproduced with permission from UNCC Institutional Research. Retrieved from <https://ir-analytics.charlotte.edu/tableau/fact-book-enrollment-summary-dashboard-o>

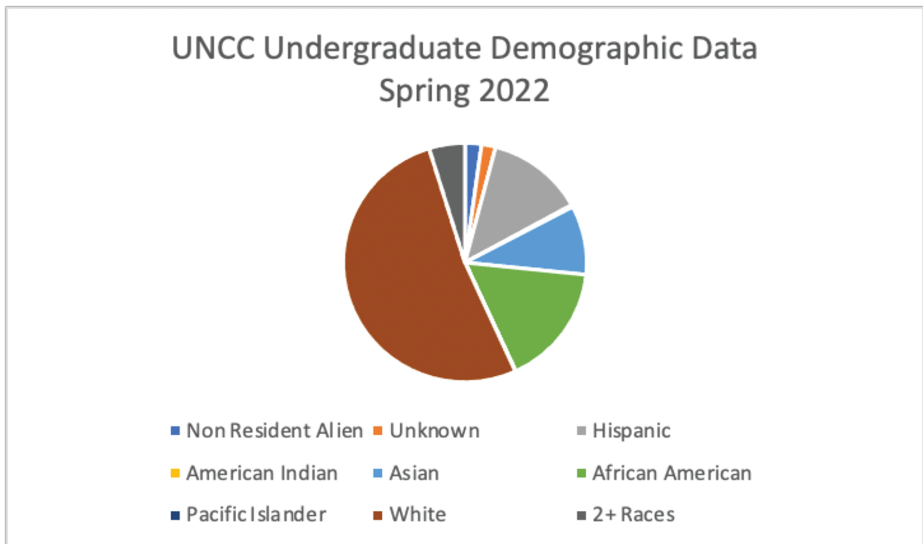


Figure 1. UNC Charlotte Undergraduate Student Demographics, Spring 2022

Reproduced with permission from UNCC Institutional Research. Retrieved from <https://ir-analytics.charlotte.edu/tableau/fact-book-enrollment-summary-dashboard-o>

Table 2. CLAS Undergraduate Enrollment, Spring 2022

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students
White 6619	50% (3,359)
Black or African American	19% (1,275)
Hispanic	14% (915)
Asian	7% (470)
Multi-Ethnic	6% (396)
International	1% (81)
Unknown	1% (104)
American Indian	<1% (16)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1% (3)

Reproduced with permission from UNCC Institutional Research. Retrieved from <https://ir-analytics.charlotte.edu/tableau/fact-book-enrollment-summary-dashboard-o>

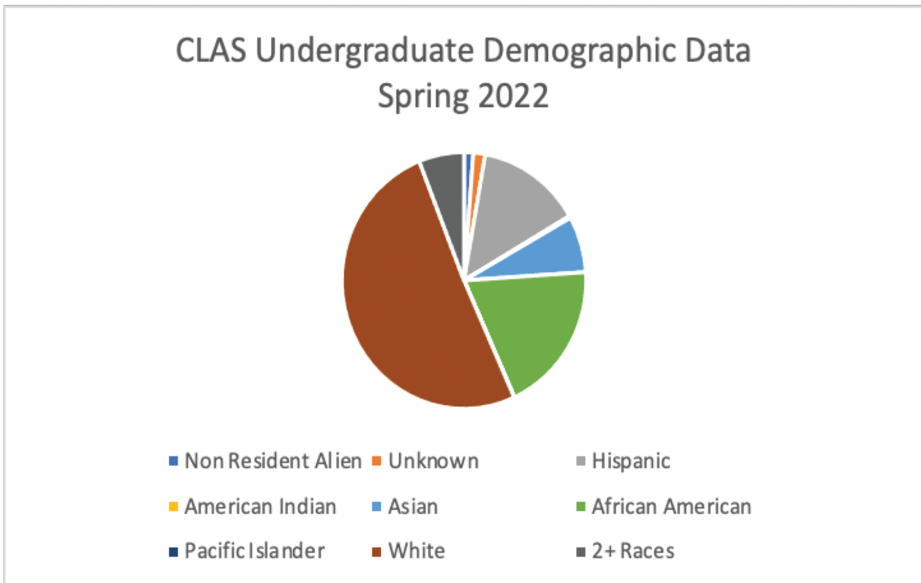


Figure 2. CLAS Undergraduate Demographic Data, Spring 2022

Reproduced with permission from UNCC Institutional Research. Retrieved from <https://ir-analytics.charlotte.edu/tableau/fact-book-enrollment-summary-dashboard-o>

## The Structure of the Undergraduate Student Success Working Group and the Work

The working group charged with identifying faculty's awareness of and access to resources that support the inclusion of race and social justice issues in pedagogy is composed of faculty and staff who represent tenure-track, nontenure-track, and administrative positions at UNC Charlotte. The working group's composition reflects staff who identify as Black and other people of color, as well as staff who identify as allies and supporters of ensuring the success of Black students. Members of the working group bring to this effort many years of experience teaching and/or working with students and a strong commitment to identifying and implementing additional opportunities to ensure student success. Given the historical and contemporary context of the issues Black students encounter, members of the working group engaged in this work both wanting to improve our personal pedagogy and identify what would be of assistance to colleagues in the classroom.

### Organizing the Work

CLAS is the largest college at UNC Charlotte and encompasses myriad departments and disciplines; therefore, efficient organization of the work was of paramount importance. In this section, we discuss the approach we undertook to accomplish the goal of identifying and making accessible race and social justice issues as they relate to pedagogy.

### Outlining the Action Items

Once members volunteered for the working group, an initial meeting took place to discuss the goals and timeline of the work. The overarching goal was to produce a product that serves as an online resource or "hub" for teaching pedagogy-focused resources to increase faculty awareness about best practices for inclusive teaching and that can help faculty make informed improvements to their interactions with undergraduate students. Table 3 delineates the action items that were outlined in the initial meeting, their subtasks, and why they were deemed necessary.



Table 3. Outline of Action Items

Action Item	Sub-tasks	Importance
1. Survey of existing resources that address the issues of diversity and pedagogy	a. Research and compile resources from various sources b. Confer with other race and social justice working groups c. Outreach to faculty leadership, faculty support, DEL, and academic advising at UNC Charlotte	Establish a baseline of current UNC Charlotte resources for faculty and their availability
2. Research resources that address issues of diversity and pedagogy in use at institutions similar to UNC Charlotte	a. Identify comparable institutions	Compile and compare resources available for faculty at similar institutions
3. Identify peer-reviewed research that addresses issues of diversity and pedagogy	a. Complete literature review	Shape theoretical framework and identify best-practices in inclusive pedagogy
4. Compile accumulated resources into a database	a. Meet with Information Technology (IT) staff to identify best shared platform	Ensure resources are held in a central and accessible location
5. Work with IT to create a centralized location for database of resources	a. Meet with IT staff to determine optimal accessibility features for database	Ensure ease of accessibility to resources
6. Work with faculty leadership to communicate existence of resources	a. Meet with leadership of various faculty groups	Disseminate information about resources and how to access them
7. Recommendations for future maintenance of database	a. Meet with Faculty Awareness working group, other Undergraduate Student Success workgroups, and faculty leadership to determine best course of action	Provide suggestions for maintaining and updating database beyond the efforts of the working group

## Challenges and Resolutions Associated With the Work

As a working group, we faced a number of challenges, some smaller than others. We discuss below the main challenges we faced and the ways in which we were able to identify solutions to those challenges.

### Timeline

As noted previously, a tight timeline was one of the challenges the working group faced. To address this challenge, the action items were divided among working group members, with every attempt to ensure that no one individual was overly tasked with items. Intermittently, meeting attendance and product submission were delayed because of other university or department commitments. However, members of the working group, in the spirit of collegiality and commitment to the goal, worked interchangeably on items and provided support wherever there was a need.

### Establishment of University-Wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Leadership

One of the very first issues to arise was that UNC Charlotte had recently implemented a university-wide effort to centralize DEI information in one place. This was accomplished through the creation of the position of associate vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion and chief diversity officer to oversee DEI efforts throughout the university. Due to the recent implementation of this role (Fall 2021), the development of a centralized repository of DEI information was concurrent to the efforts of the working group, which meant we had to contact each individual department to determine existing DEI resources that address the issues of diversity and pedagogy. It would have been less time-consuming and more efficient to undertake a census of what is available had the implementation of the DEI office occurred before the efforts of the working group commenced; however, given the context in which the work evolved, the working group had to operate concurrent with the implementation of the DEI office and sometimes efforts were redundant. Nonetheless, working group members collaborated with DEI staff to streamline our efforts and share information.

## Identifying Existing Resources in CLAS Departments

As discussed in the preceding subsection, the establishment of a university-wide DEI office represents an acknowledgment that more focused effort around DEI issues is necessary, and, by extension, this means that there is inconsistency among departments in terms of their use of and access to DEI resources that address the issues of diversity and pedagogy. The working group was able to identify departmental resources, but the effort took more time than anticipated, largely due to the fact that often the information was not readily visible on department websites. The results of our examination of departmental resources indicate that, as of Fall 2022, of 21 departments in CLAS, only 3 provided easily accessible information about DEI resources. Reviewing departmental websites, and reaching out to administrative personnel with direct inquiries, helped facilitate the assessment of existing resources; the small number of departments that provide DEI information to faculty underscore the importance of this initiative.

In summation, the challenges the working group faced were not insurmountable or overwhelming, but required a collaborative effort between working group members, the DEI office, and CLAS departments to obtain a clear picture of existing resources pertaining to the issues of diversity and pedagogy. This effort took more time than was anticipated, but a collaborative process facilitated its completion.

## Recommendations for the Inclusion of Race and Social Justice Issues in Pedagogy

The presentation of recommended best practices for addressing race and social justice issues in pedagogy in this section is by no means exhaustive, and we acknowledge that each discipline, every instructor, and individual class is different. Determining the best way to include race and social justice issues in one's pedagogy requires ongoing thoughtfulness, commitment, and willingness to revise one's approach as necessary. Transformative teaching is an interactive process that involves both the teacher and the students; the praxis must be inclusive of multiple voices and perspectives and, therefore, is subject to not only what the teacher decides but must also include space for student engagement and input (Rodriguez & Huemmer, 2019).

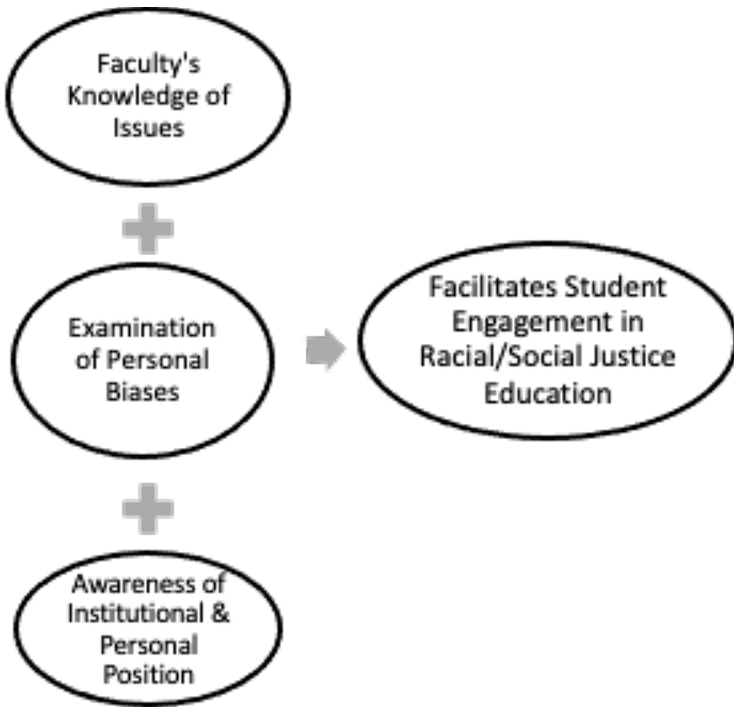
Bandy et al.'s (2021) Cognitive and Affective Theory Model invites teachers to “disrupt” assumptions students hold about race through course design and strategies of engagement. Fundamental to this model of pedagogy are two central dimensions of learning, which encompass an understanding of race, racism, and racial justice: students’ (a) cognitive development and (b) affective development. Bandy et al. define students’ cognitive development in relation to their “comprehension of race-related concepts and their ability to formulate arguments that acknowledge the social, structural, and historical forces of race and racial inequality,” and affective development as it pertains to race refers to “the social-emotional processes influencing students’ judgment and actions related to race, including their emotional capacity to engage course topics and participate in interpersonal exchanges with others in multiracial settings” (2021, p. 118). These two dimensions provide a framework of five key pedagogical principles to guide faculty in their teaching of race and race-related issues. The following recommendations derive from the work of Bandy et al. (2021) and synthesize the work of several scholars, summarized as five key elements faculty must actively engage to include race and social justice issues in pedagogy:

1. Model and Motivate Reflexivity
2. Help Students Prepare For and Welcome Conversation About Race
3. Meet Students Where They Are
4. Develop Students’ Capacity to Understand and Analyze
5. Intentional Course Preparation

Each of these recommendations is discussed in greater detail below.

### Recommendation 1. Model and Motivate Reflexivity

The start of social and racial justice pedagogy begins with the teacher. Teachers set the tone for student engagement in the classroom, and, thus, they must first grapple with their knowledge, or lack thereof, concerning race and social justice. Scholars emphasize the importance of faculty evaluating how race shapes one’s knowledge of oneself and others, as well as one’s biases and beliefs (Hooks, 1994, 2003, 2009; Adams & Love, 2010; DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2018; Harbin et al., 2019; Castillo-Montoya, 2019; Bandy et al., 2021). Reflexivity involves a willingness by faculty to deeply examine and acknowledge their



Graphic 1. Modeling Reflexivity

Adapted from Harbin, M. B., Thurber, A., & Bandy, J. (2019). Teaching race, racism, and racial justice: Pedagogical principles and classroom strategies for course instructors. *Race and Pedagogy Journal: Teaching and Learning for Justice*, 4(1).

attitudes toward race, racism, and social justice, which is important and necessary for establishing spaces in which race and social justice education can occur. Harbin et al. (2019) suggest that faculty model reflexivity by examining and sharing with their students their reflection on their personal experiences of marginalization, privilege, and internalized dominance.

Acknowledging that, particularly around dialogue concerning issues of racial injustice, students may respond differently to faculty based on perceived race and other identifies. Harbin et al. (2019) also stress the importance of addressing faculty positionality, which can be used to encourage student reflexivity through assignments that require students to reflect on their perceptions of and reaction to an instructor's positionality.

In the Participatory Action Research Model of pedagogy, which draws on the social justice framework of Fraser and Naples (2004), Aktaş notes the distinction between *social justice education* and *socially just education*:

Models for incorporating both social justice education (teaching social justice issues as a part of the course content) and socially just education (incorporating social justice principles in the learning and teaching model). There is an important distinction between the two concepts, because, in the latter, social justice is not explicitly taught in reference to a discipline or topic but determines how the educator conducts the class and relates to the students. (2021, pp. 2–3)

Extending the context of reflexivity further, Dewsbury et al. assert that faculty development of inclusive practices must move beyond simply encouraging faculty to implement formulaic, generalizable “best practices.” Faculty should be encouraged to explore the historical relationship of higher education with exclusion, and their own socio-economical positioning, before considering the potential role they can play as part of the solution moving forward. (2021, p. 53)

Castillo-Montoya posits that for students to learn through diversity, faculty must know how to teach through diversity, and defines *teaching through diversity* as “enacting pedagogical strategies that activate the diversity present in the classroom to engage and support students’ learning of academic content, themselves as cultural beings, others, and their sociopolitical world” (2019, p. 201). Aligned with the emphasis of Harbin et al. (2019) and Bandy et al. (2021) on teachers’ reflexivity, Dewsbury (2020) outlines in the Deep Teaching Model of pedagogy two steps that are critical to addressing race and social injustice issues: (1) teachers must acknowledge the relevant extent of their lack of knowledge of the history of exclusion in higher education in the United States as it relates to race, ethnicity, class, and power; and (2) before student or faculty from marginalized identities can engage in acknowledgment, they require an environment in which individuals can be trusted to practice what is learned.

Dewsbury et al. (2021) identify an interconnecting cycle of the three tenets of the Deep Teaching Model as important to faculty engagement: (1) a solid knowledge base; (2) the development of skills to enable difficult dialogue; and 3) attitudinal traits. The attitudes of teachers relate to their exposure to

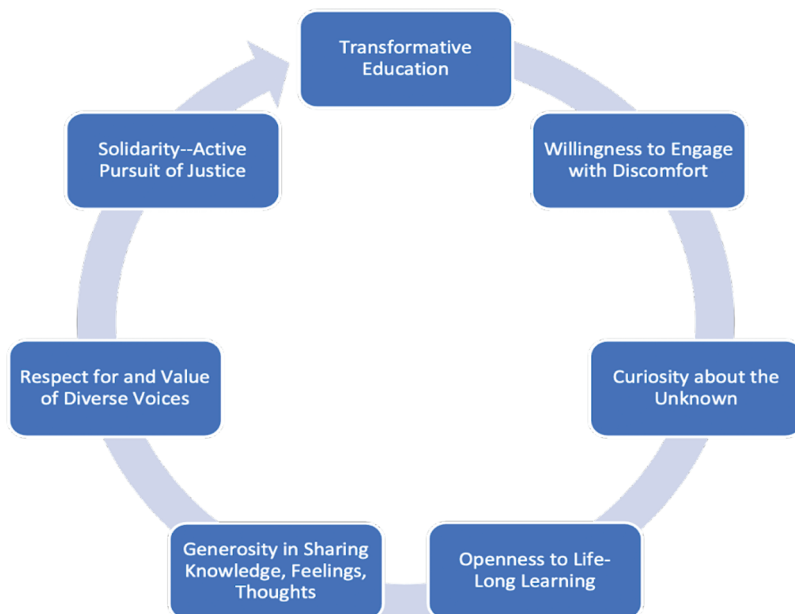


Figure 3. Attitudinal Traits of Transformative Educators

Adapted from Dewsbury, B. M., Murray-Johnson, K., & Santucci, A. (2021).

Acknowledgement and its role in the faculty development of inclusive teaching. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, 35(3), 53–62.

knowledge and their skills development in incorporating knowledge into challenging conversations. The ability to have conversations about race and social inequality that challenge and engage the critical thinking and understanding of both teachers and students is a cornerstone of transformative education. Attitudes are critical to how teachers approach their students and create space that invites the contributions of diverse voices. Adapted from their research, Figure 3 depicts the attitudinal traits that Dewsbury et al. (2021) suggest are valuable for teachers who engage in inclusive and transformative education.

The design of learning experiences must challenge students to thoroughly explore the history of exclusion in both higher education and in society at large and enable teachers to use their power and privilege to change the context of learning in higher education moving forward (Harbin et al., 2019; Dewsbury et al., 2021).

## Recommendation 2. Help Students Prepare For and Welcome Conversations About Race

In the “banking concept” of education, Freire (1981) argues that students are not mere repositories into which teachers deposit knowledge but rather come to classrooms with inherent knowledge and perspectives that are relevant to their education and worthy of respect. Teachers have the responsibility, however, of helping students navigate conversations about race, racism, and racial injustice. Faculty can help student preparation by ensuring their courses have strong goals and specific learning outcomes that address issues of race and social injustice, and by providing a selection of course materials and supplemental content that offer a diversity of voices and approaches to learning (Harbin et al., 2019; Rodriguez & Huemmer, 2019). Using approaches such as writing and classroom discussions to practice critical reflection on the process, faculty can help students embrace discussions about race and racism that may be discomforting to some (Bandy et al., 2021). This allows students an opportunity to acknowledge and engage in dialogue about race, ethnicity, class, and the effects, both historical and contemporary, of unjust power structures on society (Dewsbury et al., 2021).

## Recommendation 3. Meet Students Where They Are

Faculty must prepare to teach not only students who have little knowledge about understanding and analyzing issues of social and racial justice but also students who misunderstand the issues and may actively or passively confront or challenge faculty, especially faculty of color (Ellis, 2016; Smith & Tuck, 2016; McGowan et al., 2021). It is necessary for teachers to address the needs of both marginalized students and those who are systematically privileged by anticipating or surveying their various misconceptions and scaffolding lessons and assignments to enhance their knowledge and skills (Bandy et al., 2021). It is important to be transparent about discussing polarizing issues, to quickly address conflicting views, and to be aware that students of color, along with students who identify as biracial and multiracial, might resist learning about racial injustice as much as White students due to internalized oppression (Renn, 2000, 2003).

Harbin et al. (2019) offer four suggestions for planning courses to address and deconstruct students’ misunderstanding of or resistance to confronting racial injustice:

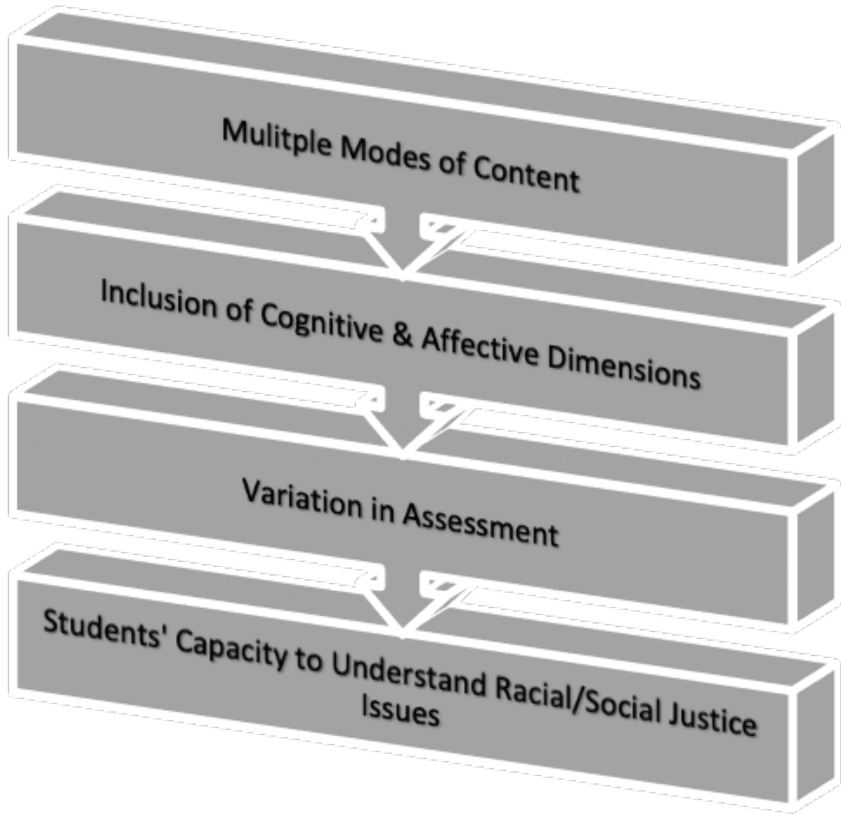


1. *Anticipate students' misconceptions* about race and structure assignments to help deconstruct misunderstandings.
2. *Diversify the voice, discipline, and forms* of course materials to facilitate a critical approach to dialogue around race and support an inclusive learning environment.
3. *Use a "backwards design" template* to intentionally design courses that provide strategic organization and a scaffolding of assignments to help students unpack their preconceived notions and ideologies about race. Instead of creating group-centered syllabi that focus on individual groups in isolation, create concept-centered syllabi, which focus on key ideas to examine and analyze broader social processes and understandings of the sociohistorical significance of race and ethnicity.
4. *Incorporate diverse forms of assessments* beyond the usual quizzes, exams, and papers; consider other modes of assessment that assess affective and social development and align better with the learning objectives.

As Harbin et al. (2019) acknowledge, good course design is necessary but alone is not sufficient when teaching about social and race justice; these topics require that faculty successfully navigate and manage classroom discussion and engagement, and ensure that all students have the opportunity to apply, process, and expand their knowledge of these critical issues.

#### Recommendation 4. Develop Students' Capacity to Understand and Analyze

Developing students' capacity to understand and analyze race and social justice is both a challenge and an opportunity for educators. To build the capacity for grasping and addressing issues of race and social injustice, Bandy et al. (2021) recommend that faculty incorporate multiple modes of content into their syllabi to help students think and feel differently about race and racism, use a variety of assessments of learning, and incorporate items such as autobiographical reflections or video blogs to uncover racial assumptions and unlearn internalized racisms. The inclusion of cognitive and affective dimensions in course planning and assignments can help students develop conceptual understanding and a deeper awareness of the emotional magnitude of race and racism.



Graphic 2. Develop Capacity

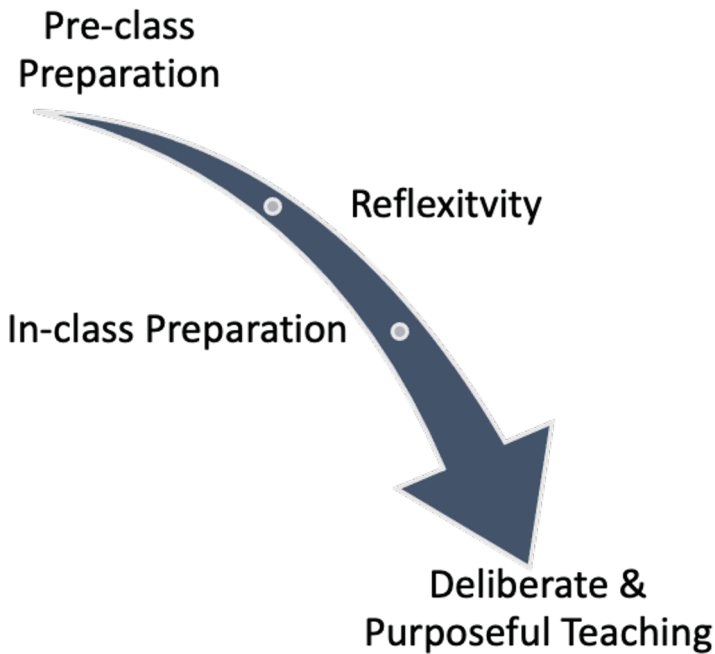
With a Participatory Action Research framework, Aktaş (2021) argues that students can change education through reflection and action and a socially just framework can help them understand the social injustice of their educational experience and enable them to incorporate their lived context into course development, building their capacity while positioning them not merely as recipients of the educational process but collaborators in and owners of their learning. This framework actively engages students in community with teachers, collaborating to develop course content that accurately reflects the lived experiences of students and presents the perspectives of voices that are often omitted, dismissed, or ignored (Aktaş, 2021).

Martin and Beese offer case study pedagogy as another way to engage students and develop their capacity for analyzing social injustice issues. They define a case as a “storied narrative, with various points of view, perspectives, and conflicts, and an ending without a clear-cut resolution” and suggest that, when supported by discursive and reflective practices that intensify the learning process, case studies can help build students’ capacity by providing real-world application (2020, p. 211). Similar to the benefit of small group work and collaboration highlighted by Harbin et al. (2019) and Aktaş (2021), Martin and Beese (2020) support the use of small groups of students in classrooms to analyze and clarify issues that arise from large group discussions, which help students connect theory and cases. The iterative process of having students read, question, discuss, analyze, and reflect on cases to develop solutions or optimal courses of action provides them with an opportunity to tackle real issues in meaningful ways.

### Recommendation 5. Intentional Course Preparation

The final key recommendation supported by the research is that faculty must intentionally engage affective and embodied dimensions of learning by attending to the aspects that facilitate or disrupt student learning. According to Bandy et al., intentionality allows faculty to address the “experience, memory, feeling, motivation, value, trauma, and resistance that facilitate or disrupt student learning” (2021, p. 120). Harbin et al. state that “addressing misconceptions proactively and in an intentional order is more likely, both to motivate student learning, and to transform their racial preconceptions, thus making them more receptive to critical race studies” and emphasize that intentionality by faculty is necessary to deal with challenges from students and promote deep reflection on the history of racial injustice (2019, pp. 8–9). To facilitate dialogue around topics of race and social justice with students, course preparation must be deliberate, purposeful, systematic, and include preclass planning, reflexivity, and in-class preparation (McGowan et al., 2021).

In summation, the research on best practices stress the central themes of developing faculty’s knowledge and awareness around issues of social and racial justice, creating safe spaces for student engagement and the inclusion of their voices and perspectives, and helping students navigate complex discussions while developing their capacity to grapple with issues of race and social injustice. Another recurrent theme is the importance of building shared



Graphic 3. Intentionality

Adapted from McGowan, B. L., Jones, C. T., Boyce, A. S, Watkins, S. E. (2021). Black faculty facilitating difficult dialogues in the college classroom: A cross-disciplinary response to racism and racial violence. *Urban Rev* 53, 881–903.

community and developing collaborative education planning between teachers and students to enable active engagement in social justice at the grassroots level of classroom, which allows both faculty and students to acknowledge and challenge the injustices perpetuated in higher education (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2018; Harbin et al., 2019; Chin & Morales, 2020; Williams et al., 2020; Valderama-Wallace & Apesoa-Varano, 2020; Pérez, 2022; Veri et al., 2022). Finally, faculty must be deliberate and intentional with course planning and development, and mindful of employing assignments and assessments that align with learning outcomes around social and racial injustice (Harbin et al., 2019; Rodriguez & Huemmer, 2019; Aktaş, 2021; McGowan et al., 2021).

## Conclusion

The significance of incorporating issues of race and social justice into pedagogical approaches does not make it easy. Research identifies the

challenges to revising pedagogy, including the fact that faculty and students arrive at colleges and universities often ill prepared to engage productively in dialogues about contentious and emotional subjects such as structural and systemic racism and methods of social change (Bandy et al., 2021). Despite the challenges, it is imperative that faculty engage students in dialogues around these issues. As Bandy et al. state:

We become complicit with these systems of injustice if we tacitly affirm (White) fragility and if we do not create spaces for all of us to engage in transformative dialogues that, however difficult, hone the skills for creating a racially just society. (2021, p. 133)

We encourage faculty to undertake the work required for the inclusion of race and social justice issues in their pedagogy; it is necessary to facilitate our students' capacity for critical thinking and their academic success.

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### KENDRA JASON

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This book is the culmination of 2 years of concerted work toward dismantling anti-Black racism and social justice in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS) at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte from 2021 to 2023. This edited volume has 19 contributors, but was written with the support of nearly 100 Race and Social Justice Working Group members and 8 working group leaders: Jason Black, Maisha Cooper, Paola Lopez-Duarte, Debaratti Dutta, T. K. Khan, Richard Leeman, Pinku Mukherjee, and Stephanie Potochnick. I am very proud of what we were able to accomplish in such a short period of time. In this conclusion, I offer big-picture framing on how to engage in this work, coupled with individual acts of accountability. I discuss our accomplishments and what's next for our college.

### Creating a Network of Support

Race and social justice work cannot hang on the efforts of one person, or even a few key people. A network of support must be created around individuals who champion this work. A network of support includes administrators who advocate and provide resources such as time, money, and staffing. The network includes diverse committee groups that represent a variety of experiences and contributions based on a diversity in race, gender, department, employment status, title, and other statuses. The network of support is ongoing and designed to be embedded in the organization. There are a few instances where this work is temporary, such as a task or working group, programmatic ventures, or invited guests; however, this work can only be effective with institutional buy-in.

One of the greatest contributions of this book is that no one member of the academy should be able to say they do not know what is needed or what they can do. In seven chapters, we have laid out our recommendations and action steps for moving forward. We have shared our challenges and how

we overcame those challenges to get the work done. We have shared many of these ideas with the writers of the CLAS strategic plan, with departmental chairs, with the CLAS Administrative Council, and with the dean of the college. Although we lay out strategies here, it is still up to you to determine how these ideas get implemented.

## A Time of Change and Accountability

I often say that institutions are slow to change, however, our college and university are undergoing some of the most significant and historical changes of our time. The long-term dean of CLAS, Nancy Gutierrez, retired in early 2022. Our provost of 20 years, Joan Lorden, retired in Fall 2022. One year ago, we hired our university's inaugural associate vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion and chief diversity officer, Brandon Wolfe. In 2020, Sharon Gaber became the fifth chancellor of UNC Charlotte and the first woman leader since our founder, Bonnie Cone; also in 2020, our university developed a roadmap to R1 Carnegie Classification. Finally, the university is undergoing institutional restructuring and possibly creating a new college that directly impacts CLAS. Needless to say, there is much uncertainty in CLAS and the broader university. But the work must go on.

We must figure out where these action steps lie in our new structures and offices. We must figure out who is responsible for execution and who is responsible for accountability. We must figure out how to compensate and elevate equity work in a meaningful way. These challenges are up to YOU to help figure out. It is not the work of another, but the collective effort of all of us to uphold *and practice* the institutional values of equity, diversity, and inclusion to increase marginalized members' sense of belonging, retention, and compensation.

## What Can You Do?

I am often asked, what are CLAS departments doing to improve their race and social justice efforts? I offer here a how-to list on what you can do:

1. *Assess your department.* This can be done through climate surveys, student and faculty feedback, or sharing with colleagues during meetings.

2. *Acknowledge there is a problem.* Once an issue is presented, do not rationalize it away, justify it, or ignore it. Call meetings, engage in self-reflection, and create accountability measures to identify the source(s) of the issue(s) presented.
3. *Communicate about it.* Reach out to university members who can help guide you through the action steps to address the issue(s). Quickly call meetings to discuss in open format to understand how your departmental members are experiencing the issue(s).
4. *Create time and space to work on it.* Acknowledge that this is deep work and do not expect it to be handled in one meeting or exchange, but rather more time needs to be built into standing meetings to make room for open discussion and strategizing.
5. *Create DEI committees.* Create ad hoc equity committees, task forces, or working groups to focus on equity-related elements of the department. Often, these committees become formalized over time.
6. *Value the work of the DEI committees.* When the equity committees share, listen with the intent to support. This is not the case of just “reporting committee work,” but developing a bidirectional relationship between equity committee members and the broader departmental members. Develop a working plan at each meeting.
7. *Seek to understand Black members’ needs.* This is central to the Race and Social Justice Initiative, which focused on dismantling anti-Black racism. Create welcoming spaces for Black members to express their experiences. Of course, these efforts go beyond anti-Black racism and acknowledge other race, gender, sexual orientation, and relationship identities.
8. *Create programs and pipelines to meet those needs.* Once there is an understanding of the gap that Black members experience, make efforts to fill the gap. This includes scholarship, mentoring, and pipeline programs for undergraduate and graduate students, hiring and supporting racially/ethnically diverse faculty and staff, and creating avenues for advancement for marginalized faculty and staff who have been previously overlooked.
9. *Update policy and curriculum.* Ensure that equity and inclusion are evident in your strategic plans, workload policies, curriculum, syllabi, and professional practices.

10. *Make it a collective effort.* Value the input of the department liaisons for equity and inclusion. Create formal and informal groupings that center equity work. Open research collaborations to diverse and minoritized members. Have a positive attitude about working collectively on equity.

These steps are not exhaustive or chronological. Just as with all the other recommendations presented in this book, they are strategies that we have tried, or have been found effective, toward equity work.

### What's Next for the College's Equity Work?

One institutional support Chief Diversity Officer Brandon Wolfe has put into action is the creation of an assistant dean of inclusive excellence in each university college to begin in 2023. This person will work in the dean's cabinet to support the college's equity efforts. For CLAS, this broadens the role of the race and social justice advocate, as anti-Black racism is no longer the primary focus, but rather equity across all regards. The current race and social justice advocate role has sunset, and I moved into the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to support DEI strategic initiatives on the university level. This allows me to advocate for the needs of CLAS while broadening my impact across the university.

I am confident that the good work that the nearly 100 CLAS Race and Social Justice Working Group members will not be in vain. We have already changed policy, created new positions, created or reinvested in equity programming, awards, and acknowledgment for faculty. We have hired more diverse faculty and staff, and invested in revising our curriculum and syllabi to better meet the needs of our diverse student body. We have created, nearly tangible, synergy around our race and social justice efforts. New research collaborations, committees, and even friend and social groups have evolved from our last 2 years of work.

We have created virtual and physical documents to record institutional processes. We have created a race and social justice resource repository. We have identified allies (supporters of equity in theory), accomplices (allies who work to dismantle systems of oppression), and coconspirators (those who take risks by working alongside communities they support). Equity work is being shared so that those who have been doing the work for years can share the load. Some

are getting compensated (e.g., time, wages) for equity work for the first time in their career. Some research funding requires an equity lens. Colleagues are beginning to challenge problematic peers and hold them accountable for the safety of marginalized students, faculty, and staff. Some of our key policies have been updated with an equity lens and the list goes on. Still, the question remains: What's next for CLAS? That answer is up to you.

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## **CLAS Justice and Equity Project**

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences is committed to eliminating systemic racism wherever it exists in its practices and policies. This is not a new commitment, but it is a commitment that many of us have allowed to become perfunctory and mechanical, both in its expression and in its operationalization. Such token adherence is an embarrassment to a college that has as its mission student access, creation of knowledge, and human/social improvement.

The college will re-energize and sustain this commitment by embedding the project's implementation in both ongoing initiatives and in a newly developed infrastructure. This project will not simply be part of the college strategic plan, but will serve as its foundation. Every goal and action of our strategic plan will be derived from our commitment to eliminate racist practices from our instructional and research worlds, with the goal of creating an equitable and just future.

Departments and programs are committed to examining their practices, their policies, their curricula, and their pedagogies and revising them to insure justice and equity. While the college office will provide staff support, resources, and advocacy for this project, college faculty will be the drivers.

**ORIGINAL SUGGESTIONS COPYRIGHT BY SONYA Y. RAMSEY****UNIVERSITY**

- REVIEW OF PRACTICES REGARDING DIVERSITY IN THE COLLEGE COMMITTEE
- CONSEQUENCES FOR RACIST ACTS/MORE TRAINING/MORE SEVERE
- OMBUDSPERSON THAT IS TRAINED TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS RELATED TO RACE AND ANTI-BLACKNESS/DIVERSITY
- DIVERSITY OFFICER THAT ADDRESSES FACULTY ISSUES AS WELL AS STUDENT RETENTION
- EXPAND CHANCELLOR'S DIVERSITY GRANT TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY RESEARCH AND COURSE DEVELOPMENT

**CLAS/DEPARTMENT CHAIRS: REGARDING PROMOTION**

- REEVALUATION OF CRITERIA REGARDING ACADEMIC JOURNALS THAT RELATE TO RACE FOR PROMOTION
- OMBUDSPERSON OR CLIMATE COMMITTEE TRAINED TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS/ISSUES RELATED TO RACE/ANTI-BLACKNESS/DIVERSITY/
- CONDUCT SECOND-YEAR INTERVIEWS WITH FACULTY OF COLOR AND DIVERSE FACULTY
- ACKNOWLEDGE THE RACIAL/GENDER BIASES IN STUDENT EVALUATIONS
- OFFER SMALL GRANTS TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY RESEARCH AND COURSE DEVELOPMENT IN THE HUMANITIES
- ACKNOWLEDGE ADDITIONAL SERVICE BURDENS OF WOMEN/PERSONS OF COLOR/LGBT WHO ARE WORKING WITH FELLOW FACULTY AND ADVISING STUDENTS/ IN PROMOTION
- DIVERSE FACULTY SHOULD NOT BE THE ONLY ONES TO SERVE ON DIVERSITY COMMITTEES
- INCENTIVES FOR CHAIRS/FACULTY THAT RE-EVALUATE PRACTICES AND/OR STANDARDS THAT MAY BE DISCRIMINATORY

**CLAS/DEPT. CHAIRS AND FACULTY**

- TRAINING ON ANTI-BLACKNESS/ANTI-RACISM/INTERSECTIONALITY SIMILAR TO SAFE TRAINING (INCENTIVES GIVEN TO ATTEND, (FREE LUNCH?)
- DIRECTIVES TO FACULTY/CHAIRS TO EVALUATE AND LISTEN RATHER THAN GET DEFENSIVE AND

DISMISS FACULTY WHEN THEY CITE ISSUES OF RACISM/SEXISM BY FELLOW FACULTY/CHAIR

- RECRUIT QUALIFIED GRADUATE STUDENTS/FACULTY FROM HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITIES (HBCUS-EXPAND BEYOND PERSONAL CONNECTIONS OR UNIVERSITY NAME RECOGNITION
- JOINT EVENTS/PROJECTS/INITIATIVES WITH FACULTY FROM HBCUS
- GIVE MORE INCENTIVES/REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS TO TAKE COURSES RELATED TO RACE AND DIVERSITY
- MORE PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY COURSES BY ADVISORS/UNDERGRADUATE COORDINATORS
- WELLNESS OR PRODUCTIVITY RETREATS AS REWARDS FOR RESEARCH/SERVICE/MENTORING FOR DIVERSE FACULTY (MAYBE IN OUR NEW HOTEL)
- AWARD FOR FACULTY/CHAIRS WHO HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN MEETING DIVERSITY GOALS IN THEIR DEPARTMENT OR WITH STUDENTS

**STUDENT SUCCESS**

- WORK WITH STUDENT RETENTION SERVICES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHO OUR STUDENTS ARE?
- OMBUDSMAN/CLIMATE COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS STUDENT CONCERNS
- TRAINING TUTORING/MENTORS IN ISSUES RELATED TO DIVERSITY AND THEIR FIELD
- WORK WITH FRESHMEN STUDENT ORIENTATIONS TO SHARE CONCERNS RELATING TO THE HUMANITIES
- FRESHMEN WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS THAT ARE FIELD SPECIFIC FOR DIVERSE STUDENTS
- DIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR PROGRAM/GRADUATE STUDENTS MENTORING WORKSHOPS
- PROMOTING HUMANITIES TO DIVERSE STUDENTS FOR RECRUITMENT IN HIGH SCHOOLS
- LISTSERV FOR PERSONS OF COLOR/LGBT AND OTHER DIVERSE STUDENTS TO INTERACT AND LEARN MORE ABOUT CLAS COURSES, PROFESSORS, AND PROGRAMS TO BUILD COMMUNITY

Figure 1 Proposal for the Working Group, by Sonya Y. Ramsey

Source: Ramsey, S. Y. (2020). Original suggestions for the working group. Unpublished notes.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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*Race and Social Justice: Building an Inclusive College Through Awareness, Advocacy, and Action* is designed to support college and university members as they navigate and aim to eliminate individual, interpersonal, and institutional discrimination and seek to create more inclusive workplaces and learning environments for faculty, staff, and students. Through the narratives of faculty and staff from the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, who were charged with dismantling anti-Black racism, we learn from their concerns, challenges, successes, and change process; as well as what works and does not when building diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice into the fabric of a large college. This book centers the work of six Race and Social Justice working groups. Each chapter will detail research in the areas of self-reflection, anti-racist workplace practices, policy, faculty research and outreach, graduate recruitment and success, and undergraduate student success. National- and college-level statistics are provided as context for recommendations, action steps, and suggested short- and long-term planning towards racial equity in higher education.



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