

# CHASS Racism Audit Summary

In September 2020, Dean Braden asked academic units in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to conduct "racism audits" to "identify institutional policies, practices, or principles that either sustain institutional racism/white privilege, or that interfere with our ability to be actively anti-racist." In November 2020, the Diversity Advisory Committee reviewed racism audits from Communication, English, Foreign Languages and Literatures, History, Interdisciplinary Studies, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Psychology, Social Work, Sociology and Anthropology, and SPIA.

This summary is intended to help academic units in revising racism audits, which should be submitted at the beginning of spring semester: the second week of the semester (the week of January 25), or after the first faculty meeting. Academic units might learn from and apply the different methods and emphases of the racism audits of others in the college.

## Methods and Emphases in the Racism Audits

Academic units adopted different methods to complete the racism audits:

- Faculty discussed policies, practices, or principles that sustain racism in a faculty meeting.
- Departments conducted listening sessions<sup>1</sup>, surveys<sup>2</sup>, and forums<sup>3</sup>.
- Departmental committees reviewed policies and practices related to their responsibilities.

Academic units in the racism audits focused on different populations, with the least attention paid to staff. Additionally, academic units focused on different issues. The following list of the collective emphases may provide academic units with directions for future lines of inquiry.

### Students

- Admissions requirements (graduate)
- Recruitment and retention
- Time-to-graduation and graduation rates
- Mentoring
- Financial support
- Anti-racist and inclusive course and curricular revisions

<sup>1</sup> English, for example, held a listening session for all graduate students with a faculty member of color and the Director of Graduate Programs, in which faculty listened without defending.

<sup>2</sup> Those interested in surveys should consult the [regulation on surveys](#).

<sup>3</sup> Social Work, for example, set up an anonymous forum on [Padlet](#).

- Recognition of student work on race and racism
- Bias reporting process

#### Staff

- Diverse hiring policies and practices
- Continuing education and career advancement
- Mentoring
- Financial support
- Recognition of staff work on race and racism
- Bias reporting process

#### Faculty

- Recruitment and retention
- Mentoring
- Financial support
- Assessment criteria in hiring faculty; annual review process; standards for reappointment, promotion, and tenure
- Training on microaggressions and unconscious bias
- Recognition of faculty work on race and racism
- Bias reporting process

## Challenges

The racism audits and conversations among Diversity Advisory Committee members reveal several challenges in addressing institutional racism. In finalizing racism audits in the fall and/or making plans for action items in the spring, academic units might consider if any of these challenges apply and might consider how to account for them.

There is some sense that the traditional departmental, college, and university leadership may not be best equipped to understand and address institutional racism, and that they may therefore not prioritize the problem, especially if it makes them uncomfortable or if it seems too challenging to solve. Some worry that traditional leadership, in the press of many other urgent problems, might prefer to remain unaware of the impact and experience of racism at NC State. Some faculty and staff view leadership efforts to address racism as superficial and believe that leaders' expressed commitment to diversity is not actually put into practice. For some, the failure to resolve long-standing, well-known problems has contributed to a sense that leadership cares more about "optics" on equity, than actual equity itself. For this reason, some faculty and staff perceive a leadership vacuum, but some do not feel empowered to effect change without the support of traditional leadership.

Some feel strongly that the burden should not fall on faculty of color to solve institutional racism, when these faculty are already burdened by the experience of it. Additionally, some staff and faculty of color may be reluctant to share their experiences of racism or participate in

the conversation, perhaps because they have previously done so and felt ignored, because they are mindful of the hierarchies of the university and the power of senior colleagues, or because they think little will be accomplished. Problems of racism may be especially acute for staff of color, who may feel isolated within their units. Some staff experience the university as a hierarchical institution in which they have little recognition or voice.

At the same time, some in the college do not perceive any problems, and they either ask that the existence of racism at the university be proven, dismiss the significance of racism more generally, or object to what they see as reverse racism. Faculty in the humanities and social sciences are particularly accustomed to thinking of social problems. For this reason, some faculty may see racism as a problem that occurs elsewhere. These faculty may feel that their perspectives are being suppressed, amid the current national reckoning with racism. Others may acknowledge racism as a problem, but do not feel equipped to propose solutions or implement change. Still other faculty struggle to convince their colleagues of the significance of racism, its effects on members of the community, and the importance of substantive self scrutiny and accountability. Some call on colleagues who deny the existence of a racism problem at the university to educate themselves; these faculty do not understand why their colleagues remain blind to this problem, especially as they are scholars, who are trained to conduct research, and racism in the academy is a well-studied phenomenon.

Some in the college believe that the most urgent problem is the pandemic and that additionally tackling racism at this time further burdens an already overwhelmed community. Others view racism as an urgent problem that has remained unaddressed for too long. They see this time, during which many people have become attuned to this long-standing problem, as a moment, perhaps fleeting, during which significant change might be possible.

## Recommendations for College and University

Given the challenges identified during the racism audit process, some faculty and staff look to college and university leaders for substantive action. Several departments in their racism audits identified ways that the college and university can act on a commitment to anti-racism.

Support departmental anti-racism efforts by:

- Assembling more data (beyond statistics) on:
  - Students examining undergraduate and graduate student experiences of classes, departments, and the campus climate, by race, class, gender, disability, sexuality, and first generation college student status;
  - Demographic trends of students in classes, majors, and the college over the past ten years in relation to the demographics of the state and university;
  - Comparative retention, performance, and graduation rates and time-to-graduation of students in different demographic categories, to allow examination of causes of lower levels of success in different demographic categories.

- Campus climate through a college survey.
- External review of departments to identify policies and practices that sustain inequity.
- College-level review of institutional racism as it affects staff of color.

Support faculty and staff recruitment, retention, and advancement by:

- Increasing funding for recruitment of faculty of color. Suggestions include: Offering funding to hire faculty of color identified through the Building Future Faculty program, developing a postdoctoral program to recruit faculty of color similar to the [Carolina Postdoctoral Program for Faculty Diversity](#), or revising policies on target of opportunity hires.
- Adopting unbiased assessment measures for annual review and reappointment, promotion, and tenure. Suggestions include: Reconsidering the role of class evaluations, given their biases against women and people of color.
- Increasing funding for mentoring faculty and staff of color. Suggestions include: Offering more funding for internal programs or external programs like the [Faculty Success Program](#) through the National Center For Faculty Development & Diversity, providing spaces and opportunities to develop a community for people of color.
- Increasing mental health care support for staff and faculty dealing with the effects of racism.
- Addressing unequal opportunities for advancement for staff and faculty of color.
- Offering more opportunities for people of color in college and university leadership.
- Supporting staff of color with continuing education and career advancement.
- Making transparent the process for reporting incidents of bias, and holding people accountable for bias.

Support undergraduate and graduate student recruitment and retention by:

- Providing support for students of color. Suggestions include: Increasing graduate student stipends to a living wage, lowering graduate student fees, no longer discouraging students on stipends from working outside the university, providing spaces and opportunities to develop a community for people of color, and increasing mental health care support for students dealing with the effects of racism.
- Increasing diversity within the student body, especially of black students. Suggestions include: Revising undergraduate admissions policies that have led to declining numbers of black undergraduate students (such as over-reliance on standardized tests), increasing funding for recruitment of graduate students of color.
- Requiring substantive coursework for all undergraduate students in historical and current racism and other inequities. Suggestions include: Changing the US Diversity co-requisite into a three-credit hour requirement, requiring a university-wide course on racism and inequity.
- Providing college-level (or funds for department-level) training and workshops on inclusive teaching. Suggestions include: Providing funds for developing discipline-specific materials on inclusive teaching, and funds for faculty to support curricular revision.
- Developing policies that hold students accountable for engaging in racist speech and behavior

The college and the university might conduct its own "racism audit" to identify policies, practices, or principles that either sustain institutional racism, or that interfere with the ability to be actively anti-racist. Departments in their racism audits provided some

suggestions:

- Provide more support for anti-racism at the college level by strengthening the ability of the Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion and the Diversity Advisory Committee to undertake anti-racism initiatives. Suggestions include: Allocating a substantial budget to the Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, giving the Diversity Advisory Committee more power to effect change, reorganizing the structure and membership of the Diversity Advisory Committee to provide more representation for staff and professional track faculty, revising the Diversity Advisory Committee mission statement to encompass staff.
- Improving transparency and accountability in bias complaints. Suggestions include: Providing a webpage with greater clarity on the reporting and resolution process.
- Requiring additional anti-racism training. Suggestions include: Requiring additional anti-racism training for administrators, further addressing implicit bias in hiring practices.
- Reviewing accounting rules that prevent departments from acting against racism and other discriminations. Suggestions include: Policies that prevent departments from supporting black-owned businesses not listed in Marketplace and therefore excluded as vendors.
- Review the messages the college and university send regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, and how those messages may contribute to institutional racism. Suggestions include: Visually representing the diversity in accurate ways on the NC State website, renaming buildings named after racist historical figures, reconsidering the content and frequency of WolfAlerts.

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