College of Natural and Applied Sciences Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee's Anti-racism Action Plan

Members

Ryan Udan (Biology, committee chair)

Tara Herring (Biology)

Jokima Hiller (Hospitality)

Paula Kemp (Mathematics)

Siming Liu (Computer Science)

Ron Malega (Geography, Geology and Planning)

Helena Metzker (Chemistry)

Sarah Morrison (Physics, Astronomy, and Materials Science)

Nandita Nag (Physics, Astronomy, and Materials Science)

Theresa Odun-Ayo (Engineering)

Jason Ray (Geography, Geology and Planning)

Avery Russell (Biology)

Steven Senger (Mathematics)

SECTIONS

- Campus Culture
- Student Recruitment and Support
- Graduate and Undergraduate Educational Program
- Hiring and Career Advancement
- Accountability and Evaluation

Campus Culture

1. A mechanism and formal language for evaluating, disciplining, educating, and firing/expelling students, staff, and faculty who participate in racist actions should be created (in compliance with Titles VI and VII), while recognizing that release from service duties does not constitute disciplining in most cases. External oversight is key.

2. Form an external committee to regularly interrogate the role of police (contracted or campus) and whether they meet the values of the university and are held accountable and publicly report results. Take action to reduce militarization of campus police and reassess who the first responders are to diverse student, staff, and faculty needs. We need non-police first responders for escort services and mental health interventions (professionals trained in de-escalation and mental health). Many of the negative interactions on #BlackAtMoState were a result of interactions with the campus police.

3. Prospective students, staff, and faculty who participate in racist actions should be reevaluated for further consideration. Racism should be rightfully acknowledged as a threat to student safety and health. SOAR should include anti-bias, anti-racism training, in addition to the current cultural competency training.

4. Mental health services should be funded at a greater rate and health services specifically geared to supporting students from historically marginalized should be offered. Evaluate current mental health services on campus for accessibility, diversity, equity. Reach out to community health care and improve access to mental health care services - partnerships. Require additional training and hiring to be able to reach out to members of historically marginalized communities. Create and maintain a resource of information on funding and mental health for underrepresented students (not just resources at MSU).

5. The university should divest from partnerships with organizations that are racist or otherwise discriminatory. For instance: Home Depot, Hobby Lobby, Chic Fil A, Mercy Health…. The university should actively research and build a list of businesses and organizations that are not consistent with MSU's anti-racist and inclusive policies before building partnerships. Currently active contracts between MSU and businesses/organizations that are not congruent with MSU's anti-racist and inclusive policies should be immediately broken if possible, and if not, such contracts should not renewed once the contract expires.

6. The university should divest from the prison labor system (modern day slavery). The university currently uses prison labor when purchasing/installing equipment. The university should investigate where equipment, supplies, and corporations get their labor from and inform faculty so that they can make decisions as well.

7. Rework diversity workshops to address anti-racism and recognize performative allyship. Focus on actively combating racism, building allyship, reallocating power, and having tough conversations. https://werepstem.com/2020/06/24/does-your-organization-really-want-to-end-anti-black-racism-4-ways-to-tell/ Hire external facilitators to reduce load on MSU staff/faculty.

College Culture

1. Establish a required, regular (every 2 years? Every 3 years?) anti-racism training for all CNAS faculty, staff, and graduate students. Evaluate and make changes (if necessary) to the training materials on the same schedule. Should be focused on actively combating racism, building allyship, reallocating power, and having tough conversations. https://werepstem.com/2020/06/24/does-your-organization-really-want-to-end-anti-black-racism-4-ways-to-tell/ Hire external facilitators to reduce load on MSU staff/faculty or compensate internal facilitators (course reduction, etc).

2. CNAS should more effectively promote anti-racism and cultural competency events held on campus. This could be via Instagram, Twitter, printed / electronic Fliers (to aid in distribution) and via traditional means (email and campus calendar).

3. Take measures to identify disparities for underrepresented students campus wide and in CNAS. This should take several forms, including a CNAS exit survey (even for people who do not leave with degrees), and a much more comprehensive CNAS survey of diversity and disparities (must involve coordination with social scientists to design these questions), which should be anonymous and administered by an external party.

4. Regularly update the diversity initiatives CNAS webpage and include a statement of commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The webpage should also include, at a minimum, an action plan, initiatives, and other documentation of efforts that increase and support the college DEI culture.

Student Recruitment and Support

1. Require graduate student admission committees to have a graduate student representative (increases equity and transparency in recruitment).

2. Cover application fees for all candidates who qualify for departmentally set criteria.

3. Create a formal reporting structure for discriminatory abusive behavior by faculty.

4. Create an anonymized survey for undergraduate and graduate students to report on conditions and abuses in departments.

5. Publicize and showcase achievements equally with regard to student background. Create a mechanism to request reports from faculty for recognition of student grants and other accomplishments.

6. Advising workshops should emphasize cultural competency and anti-racist training.

7. Require that graduate applications shall not use the GRE and should evaluate applications holistically (e.g., not just GPA). De-emphasize prestige of undergraduate institutions. Codify guidelines on how to evaluate students holistically.

8. Teaching and service awards should consider the diversity of their applicants and their efforts to support DEI. Diversity awards should not be a way of pigeonholing minoritized scholars.

9. Incentivize equitable inclusive teaching practices (for instance in review criteria for instructors), starting with classroom penalty and surveillance culture: requiring anti-cheating software like webcams targets students with disrupted environments (living at home, subject to frequent disruptions, neurodiverse etc) and is an invasion of privacy. Teaching practices like low stakes assessments and group cohesion reduce cheating significantly and should be incentivized instead.

Graduate and Undergraduate Educational Program

1. Emphasize inviting seminar series speakers from universities and departments that also respect and implement diversity and inclusion initiatives.

2. Require and value inviting more speakers from historically marginalized backgrounds. Earmark a special CNAS stipend for speakers with diverse backgrounds.

3. Require and value at least one seminar per semester per department that directly focuses on topics affecting historically marginalized communities (recognize that science is not separate from society).

4. Require and value that departmental seminars should report the diversity of their speakers and meet a minimum criterion.

5. Require and promote inclusionary teaching and advising practices. Instructors should receive awards for meaningfully diversifying their curriculum.

6. All advisors within CNAS should receive training and documentation on instilling the values of and encouraging students to develop their cultural competency through taking courses such as those that focus on the lived Black experience, white privilege, systemic racism, allyship. If possible, course(s) from the African American Studies program focusing on these topics would be a gen ed requirement for all students.

Hiring and Career Advancement

1. Support affirmative action in hiring decisions.

2. A department should be highly discouraged and investigated if hiring multiple staff or faculty from the same majoritarian background (i.e. white & male) in one funding cycle (e.g. in a cluster hire).

3. Require job searches to advertise and actively recruit from HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions. Engage with groups including the Society for Advancement of Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) and Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) during recruitment efforts.

4. Require and prioritize contributions to diversity statements ahead of all other statements in the application process for all faculty candidates. Specifically, applicants who do not provide explicit commitment to diversity (or a diversity statement document) are removed from consideration. CNAS should require a diversity statement for every future search.

5. Job searches should consider the researcher and mentor holistically: de-emphasize publication quantity and grants as priorities. https://sociobiology.wordpress.com/2020/06/10/why-we-fail-at-hiring-black-faculty-in-biology-departments/?fbclid=IwAR3x_QbFWdc3nRvCKHjSKihnf-SBiqskRSoyJbrQMacskuFANHCM9kn9fB8

6. Job searches should require a minimum proportion applicant pool from underrepresented groups. The search should fail if that pool is not met (see University of California system).

7. Include student representatives with voting power on hiring committees (increases transparency and feedback throughout hiring process). Student representation should be formalized/standardized, as compared to current ad hoc methods of obtaining student opinions from sample teaching or other brief contact with applicants. Students from diverse backgrounds should be encouraged to give feedback.

8. Incorporate DEI work into advancement and promotion: acknowledge and incentivize efforts to support underrepresented groups and hold faculty accountable for a lack of effort. DEI work includes self-promotion if the faculty/staff in question is non-majoritarian. Address/assess "invisible labor" performance criteria.

9. Advancement and promotion should not incorporate student teaching evaluations. These evaluations are shown to have no predictive quality to teaching ability and penalize non-majoritarian faculty and staff. Teaching evaluations should instead be performed by a mix of internal and external trained evaluators (e.g., faculty from other universities) to reduce bias for tenure and promotion. Evaluate teaching more holistically.

10. Protect faculty and staff from abuse received through teaching evaluations.

11. Teaching and service awards should consider the diversity of their applicants and their efforts to support DEI. Diversity awards should not be a way of pigeonholing minoritized scholars.

Accountability and Evaluation

1. Collaborate with the DEI Committee and grant the Committee voting and reviewing leverage over program and departmental policies (these could include, for instance, job searches, invited speakerships, and graduate student recruitment). The DEI Committee and Dean would consult to decide which policies would be by voting and which would be by review (i.e., a reviewing policy could be that the Committee would formally receive reports from departments on their policies and actions and recommend changes to the Dean when necessary). This would make the DEI Committee more present and more of a force than a group of people doing nothing, as it often perceived. If the DEI committee is seen as able to produce meaningful change, underrepresented faculty, staff, and students will be more likely to join the DEI Committee to make their voices heard.

2. Create and enforce a program wide anti-racist code of conduct. This should include banning hate speech and racist (e.g., Confederate) iconography.

3. Implement departmental reporting processes for conduct violations (e.g. a University level ombuds/impartial mediator system).

4. Include student representation at as many faculty meetings as possible.

5. Solicit regular external reviews of program's efforts toward supporting DEI. This should also be tied to the department and program external review system.

6. Track efforts and report publicly (including on the CNAS website) any efforts to increase support DEI. This should also be tied to the department and program external review system. See also **College Campus** section.