

Penn State Berks Faculty Senate

Monday, May 3, 2021

11:00am

Zoom (Zoom ID: 930 5840 3705; Passcode: 881903)

Agenda

- 1. Call to Order**

- 2. Discussion of Antiracism Education Report, Academic Affairs Committee (Appendix A)**

- 3. Discussion of current initiatives concerning antiracist education**
 - Justin De Senso, faculty in English and African American Studies
 - Sharon Pitterson-Ogaldez, Coordinator, Diversity & International Programs
 - Laurie Grobman, faculty in English and Women's Studies (Antiracism Across the Curriculum)

- 4. Adjournment**

Penn State Berks and Systemic Anti-Racism Education Academic Affairs Committee Interim Report

Introduction

The Academic Affairs Committee was charged with the following:

Annual Charge: Investigate how systematic anti-racism education could be incorporated into student coursework. Prepare an advisory and consultative report with recommendations.

To address this charge, the committee decided to gather information from the following sources:

1. Consultation with faculty involved with the Anti-racist Across the Curriculum Group at Berks and the Social Justice Collaborative.
2. Survey to assess faculty perspectives on anti-racism education in their courses.

This report summarizes our findings so far. It provides the Senate with an update on the information gathered.

The committee recognized the importance of the charge and that work has been done at PSU Berks regarding social justice and anti-racist education: initiatives such as the Race 101 workshops, the social justice bibliography, and a mentoring program for faculty interested in anti-racist education are some examples of this.

The committee approached Laurie Grobman, Jayné Park-Martinez, and Justin De Senso, all of whom have participated on antiracist education initiatives through the Anti-racist Across the Curriculum group and the Social Justice Collaborative. The committee wanted to have a better understanding of the experiences, and ideas of those who have already worked on the subject. In particular, the committee was interested in gaining information regarding the following:

- To what extent anti-racism and social justice teaching is already taking place at PSU Berks.
- Given the political climate in which we currently live, how teaching anti-racism elements may affect classroom dynamics.
- To what extent fear to be associated with a certain way of thinking has prevented faculty to explore/promote/adapt more this type of content.
- What is the position of faculty towards including anti-racism education within the curriculum on the different programs offered at PSU-Berks.
- What is still needed to implement anti-racism education across the curriculum at PSU Berks.

Discussion

“Anti-racism education addresses racism directly and focuses on the cognitive aspects. Anti-racist teaching confronts prejudice through the discussion of past and present racism, stereotyping and

discrimination in society. It teaches the economic, structural and historical roots of inequality” – [1].

Anti-racism education defines a set of ideas and tasks that challenge our perception of society and our role as educators in our different fields of expertise. Including anti-racism elements across the curriculum has been a long overdue task at the university level, that has been brought to attention once more due to the recent events across the nation. Yet, there has been local efforts to include such elements in individual courses. Local efforts at PSU-Berks include those of the Anti-racist Across the Curriculum Group at Berks and the Social Justice Collaborative.

The Anti-racist Across the Curriculum group has worked with interested faculty in developing and/or modifying courses and reframing them with anti-racist topics. The collaboration occurs in a one-to-one basis and it pairs new anti-racism faculty with mentors (experienced anti-racism faculty). Dr. Grobman pointed out that the approach is two-pronged: (i) content of the course, and (ii) how the issues are presented to students. The group is also interested in integrating community-based research and anti-racist elements into courses in disciplines different from social justice (such as engineering and the sciences).

Other resources exist at Berks for those interested in anti-racism education and social justice. Efforts such as the Race 101 workshops, the Social Justice Bibliography (<https://sites.psu.edu/berksjusticeresources>) are testament of this. Faculty involved with such initiatives expressed the following concerns:

- Due to the political climate in today’s America, faculty feel insecure about discussing anti-racism topics in their classes.
- Insecurity in terms of negative response by students that can damage the chemistry in the classroom, belligerent behavior in the classroom, or punitive action by means of poor SRTEs scores.
- Insecurity of faculty about whether anti-racism topics are even applicable to technical courses such as those in engineering and science.

The committee also look for comments on how to best integrate anti-racism education in the curriculum. The following comments were provided by Dr. Grobman, Dr. Park-Martinez, and Dr. De Senso:

- There is not a unique approach to anti-racism education and its implementation depends on the course subject and the individual topics being discussed.
- Acknowledgement of the limitations of anti-racism initiatives but recognizing how best to integrate it into our collective teaching, service, and overall ethos as a college.
- Pilot a team of mentors to implement these objectives and outcomes across the college, much like what Dr. Grobman is doing, but do so on a broader scale.
- Protect the faculty who take on the risks of such work. Protect those who take on very difficult and risky intellectual work, research and teaching.
- To normalize, to bake-in anti-racism, social justice, and solidarity pedagogy, it must occur culturally here at Berks.

- Invite experts in the field, with the understanding that we have experts here at Berks already.
- To provide funds allocated specifically to growing our anti-racism materials, archives, etc.
- Protect vulnerable faculty by building a protective clause/policy in the process of yearly evaluations, promotion, tenure processes where particular delivery modes/pedagogies are privileged.
- Develop a better mechanism of accountability where Berks can hold racist and bias treatment to account through a less punitive and a more restorative model.
- Encourage and incentivize faculty across the college to team up in co-teaching, the development of integrative studies classes, offering special topics classes -- just to begin the cross-pollination of anti-racist curriculum at Berks.

Additionally, the committee wanted to gather faculty perspectives on anti-racism education in their courses. The survey consisted of ten questions and was administered to all faculty (full and part time/adjunct). The survey queried faculty in the following aspects:

- Their understanding of anti-racism education and their knowledge on resources available at Penn State Berks on the subject,
- The level at which faculty have implemented anti-racism education in their coursework, and whether this implementation comes from adapting anti-racism elements to their course topics, or from having anti-racism education as part of the subjects of the course,
- The level of confidence by faculty that their courses can be adapted to include anti-racism elements in them,
- Their perception on the obstacles that have prevented them to include anti-racism education in their courses, and
- What additional support faculty believe is needed to help them implement anti-racism education in their courses.

Additionally, the survey included a space for faculty to include comments of the subject. A total of 62 faculty members completed the survey. The complete results of the survey are shown in the addendum. The survey showed contrasting results and provided interesting insights:

- Most responders (45%) were from the HASS division, contrasting 26.2% from EBC and 27.9% from Science.
- More than half the number of responders (58%) have already included to some extent anti-racism elements in their classes. Only 24.2% of the responders have courses with learning outcomes related to anti-racism education. Of those who have included anti-racism elements in their courses, 57% have adopted anti-racism elements beyond the requirements of their courses.
- Responders show a high predisposition (75.4%) to include anti-racism elements in their course work: 62.3% of responders believe that anti-racism elements can be included in their course work, and an additional 13.1% are curious about exploring this possibility to.
- Among the reasons that prevent faculty to implement anti-racism elements in their courses, the most prevalent is the lack of time to implement changes to their courses

(20.9%). Other highly voted reasons are: fear of aggressive reaction by students (15.67%); fear that including anti-racism elements will inhibit student participation in the classroom (11.19%); fear of retaliation by students through SRTes (11.19%); not knowing if anti-racism can be incorporated to their courses (10.45%); lack of support by administration (8.96%); lack of incentives to do it (8.21%).

- In terms of support, 47.5% of responders indicated that they will be willing to work on adapting anti-racism elements in their coursework if additional support is provided. Course release was the most appealing option (45.89%), followed by grants with 37.65%.
- Among the comments provided by faculty, three areas stand out: (i) providing training for faculty on what anti-racism education is; (ii) providing help in understanding how anti-racism education can be included in courses on fields such as engineering and science; (iii) allowing faculty the time needed to review and implement changes to their coursework.

Conclusions on the survey results:

- The survey results seem to indicate a bias on the background of those answering the survey: more responses seem to come from faculty that is either actively involved in areas related to social justice, or who already has interest on the subject of anti-racism education.
- The turnout of the survey indicates that a great number of faculty did not reply to it. The AAC could not obtain the most updated figure on the total number of full and part time faculty being employed at PSU Berks, but using an old figure of 227 total faculty would indicate that only the 27.3% of faculty responded.
- Reasons for not answering a survey could vary greatly, from not interest on the subject, to uncertainty on how anti-racism education applies to them, or even what anti-racism really is. This indicates that administration must contemplate the instauration of professional development for all faculty addressing these issues.
- At a time in which so much has been asked from faculty, lack of time is perceived as a major obstacle when considering changing or adapting course content.
- On the same item, it is important to mention respondent's perception that discussing anti-racism in their courses may have a negative impact in either the chemistry on the classroom or by having direct (verbal aggression) or indirect (SRTes) retaliation directly towards them.
- For respondents on STEM disciplines, it is not clear how anti-racism education can be incorporated in their coursework, or even if it is appropriate to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

Academic Affairs Committee 2020-2021

Flavio Cabrera (chair)
Ebonie Cunningham-Stringer
Lisa Glass

Elyce Kaplan
Janelle Larson
Joseph Mahoney
Dawn Pfeifer Reitz
Matthew Rhudy
Brett Spencer (vice-chair)
Lorena Tribe
Bryan Wang

**Addendum
Survey Results
Faculty on Anti-racism Education**

In this addendum the prompts for the “Faculty on Anti-racism Education” are presented, along with its raw results. In order to preserve the confidentiality of survey, comments by faculty are not included. The survey was distributed at all faculty (full and part time) within “berksfac” email list. A total of 62 responses were obtained for the first two questions, and 61 for the rest.

- Based on the definition presented before, do any of the courses you teach include topics of anti-racism education?

Yes - I have applied anti-racism education items to much of the topics in my course	10	16.13%
Yes - I have applied anti-racism education items to some topics in my course	10	16.13%
Yes - I have been able to include anti-racism education to a small number of topics in my course	16	25.81%
No	26	41.94%
I don't know	0	0%

- Do any of your courses have learning outcomes that relate to anti-racism education?

Yes	15	24.19%
No	38	61.29%
I don't know / I'm not sure	9	15.52%

- Are anti-racism education elements included in your course as part of the subject of the course, or have you adapted the course in order to present these elements to students?

Subject of the course	15	42.86%
Adopted	20	57.14%
Not applicable (N/A)	0	0%

- Do you think that anti-racism education elements can be included in any of the courses that you teach?

Yes	38	62.30%
No	14	22.95%
I don't know, but would like to know if it is possible	8	13.11%
I don't know, and I don't want to change my course	1	1.64%

- If you receive support (grant, release time, etc.) would you be willing to work on adapting your course to include anti-racism education elements?

Yes	29	47.54%
Maybe	18	29.51%
No	14	22.95%

- Which type of support would be more appealing for you to consider including anti-racism elements in your coursework (please choose all that apply)?

Grant	32	37.65%
Course Release	39	45.88%
Other	14	16.47%

- If selected "Other" in the previous question, please type what support would be appealing to you:
(answers not shown to preserve the confidentiality of the survey)

- What concerns would prevent you from incorporating anti-racism education elements in your coursework (please choose all that apply):

Student's reactions – inhibiting classroom participation	15	11.19%
Student's reactions – aggressive comments or behaviors	21	15.67%
Student's reactions – retaliation through SRTes	15	11.19%
Retaliation by others (faculty, peers in my field, broader community)	3	2.24%
Lack of support by the administration	12	8.96%
Lack of time to implement any changes to my courses	29	21.64%
Lack of incentive to implement any changes to my courses	11	8.21%
I don't think that anti-racism education is important	0	0%
I don't think that anti-racism education can be incorporated into my subject	14	10.45%
I don't think the rewards outweigh the effort	5	3.73%
Other	9	6.72%

- If selected "Other" in the previous question, please type any other concern that will prevent you to incorporate anti-racism education elements in your classes:
(answers not shown to preserve the confidentiality of the survey)

- Are you aware of any of the resources that exist at Penn State Berks to include anti-racism education elements in your courses?

Yes	43	70.49%
No	18	29.51%

- Additional Comments:

In the space below, please add any comments that you would like to share with the Academic Affairs Committee regarding "Anti-racist education". Include any concern that you may have about its implementation in your coursework; any idea that you have for promoting it; or comments regarding your understanding (or lack of it) of what "anti-racist education" is. Also, please indicate of your willingness (or not) to learn more about the subject.

(answers not shown to preserve the confidentiality of the survey)

- Please indicate the Division you belong to:

EBC	16	26.23%
HASS	28	45.90%
Science	17	27.87%