

JHCOE College/Faculty/Student Meeting, October 30, 2020

The document that accompanied the first college-wide meeting included information on the concept of privilege. Privilege exists because racism operates within and throughout the systematic structure of society. We are now going to examine racism and its impact on the college. Some useful definitions from The University of Toledo Office of Diversity and Inclusion Racial Lexicon are provided:

RACISM — Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

RACIST — One who supports a racist policy through their action or interaction or by expressing a racist idea; any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another racial group in any way.

“Racism is a structure, not an event.”

Robin Diangelo – *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*

Agenda for October 30th meeting:

Dr. McKether’s report on the President’s initiative/Questions

Report from the Diversity Committee – focus on smart goals by Aaron Baker

SaFE ANCHOR report on common themes identified from focus group of current JHCOE students

Antiracism Pedagogy Presentation by Quatez Scott

Next steps?

In addition to the material provided in the meeting, some reflections and updates on the college’s progress have been included in this document.

Racism – Is That Me?

“I am a white American raised in the United States. I have a white frame of reference and a white worldview, and I move through the world with a white experience. My experience is not a universal human experience. It is a particularly white experience in a society in which race matters profoundly; a society that is deeply separate and unequal by race. However, like most white people raised in the US, I was not taught to see myself in racial terms and certainly not to draw attention to my race or to behave as if it mattered in any way. Of course, I was made aware that somebody’s race mattered, and if race was discussed, it would be theirs, not mine. Yet a critical component of cross-racial skill building is the ability to sit with the discomfort of being seen racially, of having to proceed as if our race matters (which it does).”

Robin Diangelo – *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*

Robin Diangelo’s paragraph describes me, Ray Witte – Dean of the Judith Herb College of Education and I would presume many within this college. I am a white American with a white worldview. I do not share a universal or collective white perspective (if such a thing exists) but I certainly look at the world through a white lens, and my white lens in particular. From my perspective and experience, I find that substantial and meaningful conversation about race and racism is rare. Discussions about specific events or victims of racism may occur. However, talk about racism as an interwoven part of our society is uncommon.

The topic of not discussing race (and ancestral background) is true for my family. In fact, my German/Denmark ancestors (on my paternal side) tried to “melt” (and they could) and assimilate into the American white culture as soon as possible once they arrived to the United States. That proved to be very important especially in the 1930’s. In particular, families (including mine) understood they were not to speak German in public. German societies and groups were shut down in the Cincinnati area as talk of spies was rampant before and during WWII. None of this directly impacted me when I was growing up but it certainly was relevant for my parent’s generation and their desire not to openly disclose ethnic identification and ancestral background. For the record, my family is American and has always viewed themselves as such. That was evidenced during World War II when my father along with the U.S. Fifth Army went up the Italian peninsula, while my uncle landed on Omaha beach in Normandy, France, and my father-in-law served in the Philippines.

Unfortunately, my history (the term and spelling of history functions as a common reference point only; no exclusionary gender message or statement should be taken from its use in this document) classes in high school really didn’t teach me what I needed to know about the real story of America, as well as the establishment of my white culture. Carefully selected facts, famous battles, and dates I got. But the full story of the subjugation of the indigenous people, four hundred years of slavery in the Americas, indentured servants, discrimination of Chinese immigrants, etc. only came with personal investigation.

I found *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* by Ronald Takaki and *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn, along with original historical documents to be valuable sources of the authentic history of America.

Without question, American history reflects a painful journey for many and it continues to this very day.

“The dominant paradigm of racism as discrete, individual, intentional, and malicious acts makes it unlikely that whites will acknowledge any of our actions as racism.”

Robin Diangelo – *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*

Although we often see overt acts of racism, especially in the news or in documentaries, racism is a formal system that provides advantage based on race - the dominant white race (from a system's perspective relative to government, community resources, workplace and economic control, school resources, etc.).

But how does systematic racism impact us in the Judith Herb College of Education? Can you think of examples of how it may operate in the college?

Let's look back at the student experiences listed in the August 17 email:

- The failure to treat all JHCOE students with the same level of respect and value
- The removal and replacement of a student of color from a teaching assignment without clear/justifiable cause
- The lack of awareness/support from the current administration for Muslim students as well as students within the LGBTQ community

Are the listed items examples of systematic racism? I believe they are.

This is how I see it:

- Students of color within the college were/are perceived as less, not as competent or as deserving as our white students. From my perspective, this is the very definition and action of racism.
- Articulation excellence, whatever that really is, has no direct bearing on one's ability to teach and provide meaningful instruction. This irrelevant criteria or expectation serves as a contrived obstacle and serves/supports a racist mindset.

- Support needs to be rendered to all students and all student groups, and that has to come from the highest levels. As Dean, to not be aware of the particular concerns of our Muslims students is shameful and negligent. The same is true for our students within the LGBTQ community. For what it is worth, I am genuinely sorry for the lack of support. It was certainly not intentional. However, intent has no relevancy as the impact is felt by those who are harmed and that is the reality. Omission of support and institutional silence maintains a racist climate.

Racism - One group having power to discriminate through policies and practices against others not viewed as being in that group. Based on this definition, and from my understanding these occurrences would constitute racist events.

The examples reviewed support the contention that racism exists and impacts people of color within our college. Now, what am I (we) going to do about it? What actions, both individually and collectively, need to be taken?

Consider these questions:

As a member of the JHCOE college community (student/faculty/staff), what are you going to do?

Within your department, what are you as a faculty member going to do?

As a Dean, what I am going to do?

As Dean, I have work to do. To start with:

- Universal respect and human value have to be core values for the college, and I need to make sure those principles are recognized and maintained for everyone.
- I need to be more in tune with the operations of the departments and provide support for all graduate students with teaching responsibilities and especially our graduate students of color.
- I need to reach out to our Muslim students. I also need to reach out to our LGBTQ students. Everyone needs to feel supported within the college.

As a college, it is important that we keep an updated list of potential work to be completed, and especially of completed actions and/or changes that directly support our antiracism, diversity and inclusion work.

Here are the items that have been suggested that we continue to pursue (items underlined reflect recent progress):

- Access to any program area in the college (no testing or selection obstacles)
- College support for those with highest financial need (emphasis on scholarship monies and grants and not on loans) – Funding through Giving circles and Educator Diversity Scholarship (soon to be established)
- Mental health support, mentor support, virtual “connection groups” during isolation, study groups/circles for students
- College diversity resource site for all faculty, staff, students, alumni as well as our colleagues and practitioners in the field. A direct link to The University of Toledo Office of Diversity and Inclusion is now available on the JHCOE website main page.
- Create affiliate appointments between JHCOE and other departments including Africana studies, Sociology and Anthropology, Women and Gender Studies?? – current JHCOE policy - electives within these departments can be taken outside of program and at a lower level (e.g., Master’s course can be taken within a doctoral program if approved) if written justification is provided in student’s plan of study
- Diversity/Antiracism as a framework for every course (undergraduate and graduate) and every interaction with students and staff in the JHCOE (and every college throughout the university). Also, multicultural education courses need to be a requirement for all programs, undergraduate (EDU 1700 is taken by all teacher licensure candidates as a freshman or sophomore) and graduate (no identified course is taken). TSOC 2000 is required of all Early Childhood Education majors. In other licensure programs it is highly recommended but difficult to take given the high content requirements in Middle Education and AYA so TSOC 3000 is taken.
- Increase enrollment of minority students, those with disabilities, low income and international populations by providing access (need to be specific and beyond what we currently do) and opportunity through removal of barriers (identify those) and more intentional/recruitment efforts (specific efforts to be completed).
- Hire and retain a diverse faculty. Last two hires for the college were faculty of color.

- All faculty and staff will be trained to better understand and implement an anti-racist framework. Ongoing college-wide meetings during the 2020-21 academic year. The college will be pursuing training opportunities through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.
- Students, faculty, and staff will participate in monthly ongoing dialogues.
- Ongoing dialogue with the administrators, faculty, staff, to address discrimination, change policies, practices, and perceptions related to race and racism.
- A system will be put in place for students, faculty, and staff to report incidents of discrimination.