

Becoming an Anti-Racist University

Introduction

On October 6, 2020 EETI hosted a forum ([video](#)) discussing ways in which individuals, the College of Engineering, and UGA as a whole can make improvements in the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) space. During the forum, participants were assigned to five groups to discuss specific recommendations that can be made to reduce barriers for marginalized groups. This document is a compilation of those recommendations. *Please note that these recommendations **may not be** comprehensive and that this document highlights preliminary discussions.*

System-Wide Issue: Getting Rid of the GRE

Institutional Opportunities

- Willingness of faculty to hear reasonable arguments
- Organizational hierarchy provides a clear guide for direct action
- Newness of College allows for innovation in research – why not innovation in support for DEI?
- Increasing representation of non-white-male icons in the field/institution early (in introductory courses)

Major Institutional Barriers

- Decisions made at the administrative level without regard to School input (Organizational hierarchy can get in the way)
- Fear of the unknown, fear of change – Especially to those invested in the routine process
- Attachment to (sexist, racist) history at the institution and within a major

Faculty

- Faculty could use more training at onboarding and beyond; training that has been received in the past by faculty may have been too superficial/oversimplified – perhaps more dedicated discussion and tools would be helpful
- Use the training to help faculty members understand their existing biases so that we can take action armed with that knowledge to inform strategies/next steps
- A dedicated diversity office or faculty/staff role would be helpful (other institutions have this, but one specific to the CENGR would be ideal, and this may be in development through the Dean's task force)
- Increase visibility of efforts, improve lines of communication, and synergize activities that are happening among faculty so that it is easier to form alliances and effectively advocate for collective ideas
- Invest in future faculty – start these conversations earlier with graduate students so that they can demand for change when they become faculty members

Staff Initiatives & Ideas

- Required Training for staff members, annually or bi-annually
 - Optional training may already be available, however due to understaffing or high staff turnover many staff members don't receive dedicated time to use toward training and professional development.
- Training for staff members assisting in the hiring process
 - Help to uncover unknown bias
- Additional training during the onboarding process
 - Specifically about reporting issues of discrimination within the unit. Staff may feel they have less job security than their faculty counterparts, who in some instances also serve as their supervisor
- Staff retreat and regular staff meetings
 - This would allow for stronger collaboration on college-wide diversity and inclusion efforts
 - Also creates a more supportive and collaborative environment for staff throughout the unit
- Analysis of current staff population including diversity statistics
 - Goal to be more representative of the student population/state of Georgia

Graduate Students

- Experienced empathy, not just talking about it. Practicing what it's like to be someone else. William K. has freshman Odyssey seminar. Student experience of homeless living. When students experience that, it provides a significant appreciation of perspectives.
- [Push for] diverse lab environment. Has a positive impact.
- How to search for more diverse perspectives in the literature.
 - Book club suggestions
 - White Fragility
 - Four Agreements
 - Black Like Me
- Could develop some kind of cross-cutting initiative (i.e., including participants of all levels/types) to get together to build connections and discuss relevant, race topics. Could be a book club, or some other type of get-together.

Undergraduate Students

- Hire more diverse faculty and staff (long-term plan)
- Level playing field with instruction – not every student will begin their college experience with the same high school preparation
- Anti-Discrimination policy in syllabi – could provide comfort or open the door for students to reach out to faculty
- Anti-racism training for everyone – undergraduates, graduates, faculty, staff, administrators

- Check-in with students regularly – acknowledging that they may have struggles beyond the class
- Work with NSBE and other diverse organizations to elevate this conversation – understand their experiences with the college
- Provide communities for connection and to have these discussions – breakout room feature to meet new individuals across the college
- Incorporate privilege test into instruction somehow