

Reflection Questions

This information is a starting point for our collective reflection and discussion.

Curriculum: What we choose to teach reflects what we believe is important. Curricular concerns include the content of individual courses, the courses that comprise an academic program of study, and the broader architecture of the curriculum and co-curricular activities.

- In what ways might our curriculum require decolonizing?
- In what ways do class readings, assignments, and discussions reflect marginalized peoples, scholarship and practices?
- To what extent do our course offerings reflect the full range of human experiences as they relate to our academic disciplines?
- What do our class-produced materials (e.g., news articles, public relations campaigns, documentary films, client treatment plans, etc.) say about our values and beliefs?
- What new classes might we offer (or how can current classes be updated) to better prepare students for the world they will go to upon graduation, as opposed to the world that instructors came from?
- What curricular and co-curricular offerings already reflect or offer opportunities toward ending systemic racism?
- What necessary offerings are missing?
- Are we preparing students to “succeed” in the current system or preparing them to effectively change that system into one more reflective of racial justice and social equity?
- How exactly are we preparing our students to advance a democratic society, in keeping with our College mission?

Pedagogy: Education is about how we teach, as well as about how students learn. Inclusive pedagogy means creating learning and teaching climates in which all students and all instructors feel welcome, safe, respected, and valued.

- In what ways can instructors mitigate the impact of their implicit biases on how they teach/mentor and grade/evaluate students?
- How might Department Personnel Standards for teaching (i.e., class grade distributions) emphasize pedagogy that supports, scaffolds, and helps students to attain learning outcomes through iterative assignments and grading practices that permit, acknowledge, and reward student improvement within the course semester?
- To what extent do instructor and student expectations about “professional” standards of behavior reflect cultural biases or racist assumptions?
- In what ways can student opinion questionnaires be optimized to mitigate the research-documented reality that student evaluations of instruction and of instructors are influenced by faculty race, gender, and national origin?

Service: African American/Black and NBPOC (Non-Black People of Color) faculty/staff bear a disproportionate service burden. This includes serving on committees, mentoring students of color, educating colleagues about race, and engaging in other formal and informal activities.

- How can Department Personnel Standards for faculty service explicitly value labor (physical, cognitive, intellectual, emotional) that is done in the department, college, campus, community, and discipline in service to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous [and] People of Color) and other historically underserved groups?
- How can staff evaluations do the same kind of valuing of this undervalued and uncompensated labor?
- How might traditionally undervalued service by BIPOC instructors, mentors, staff, guest speakers, etc., be compensated?

Scholarship: Research, scholarly and creative activities are not immune from systemic bias. Perceptions of research “rigor” and creative “quality” are affected by numerous factors, including topics studied, methods of data collection and analysis, and types outlets for scholarly and creative work.

- How can Department Personnel Standards for faculty research, scholarly, and creative activities show respect for scholarship and scholars that have been traditionally marginalized in communications disciplines?
- What are some journals, competitions, media forms, community outlets, etc., that give voice to the experiences of African Americans and other marginalized peoples?
- To what extent do we explicitly or implicitly encourage or discourage knowledge-producers (whether faculty, staff, or students) to share our expertise outside the “traditional” boundaries of academic life?
- In what ways might knowledge produced in the College benefit the campus and the community in the collective fight for racial justice and social equity?

Self: Any systemic change starts with the self. We need to learn about racism (individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural), consider how it has affected us, reflect on our own identities and implicit biases, and make choices (however small) toward being anti-racist. “Being racist or antiracist is not about who you are; it is about what you do.”

- When was I first aware of my race?
- What different kinds of individual or interpersonal racism have I experienced or observed?
- In what ways does institutional or structural racism affect me personally and professionally?
- In what ways do I have more privilege compared to others, and in what ways do I have less privilege compared to others?
- In what ways might my implicit biases affect how I see others and interact with them?
- What is one specific, small thing that I personally can do to grow myself this summer in the lifelong journey to understanding race and racism?

Intersectionality. Systemic racism intersects with layers upon layers of other challenges. We need to consider the extent to which systemic racism intersects with systemic sexism, ageism, ableism, classism, heterosexism, and jingoism. We need to see students as whole people, each with a multitude of intersecting identities beyond that of “student.” Likewise, we need to see our colleagues as whole people, respecting all aspects of their holistic identities while understanding that not every identity facet is relevant in every situation.

- How might our traditional hours of operation or methods of service/curriculum delivery differentially affect students, faculty, and staff of varying backgrounds?
- How might we extend technological accommodations for diverse needs beyond the current COVID-caused reality?
- To what extent do class policies and grading practices (e.g., technology access, attendance expectations) make assumptions about students’ lives and privileges?
- In what ways might curricular requirements reify existing privilege and exacerbate existing disadvantages?