

**Oregon State University**  
**Racism and Antiracism Curriculum Taskforce**  
**2020-2021 REPORT**

**CONTEXT**

While race and racism are features of history and everyday life in the United States, in Summer of 2020 racial tensions reached a historical peak nationally, and arguably beyond. A global pandemic revealed the life and death consequences of deeply entrenched social inequalities, making them perhaps more visible than ever before. In the United States, structural racism became palpable and legible to more people, as the impacts of COVID-19 unfolded unequally along ethnoracial lines, with Indigenous, Latino, and Black communities disproportionately bearing the brunt of illness and death. Around the same time, the world witnessed the killing of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin, captured on cellphone video by a young black woman. The murder of George Floyd was, in some ways, the straw that broke the camel's back, as the killing of black people by police has become all too common. An upsurge of mass mobilizations ensued in the United States and across the globe. Black Lives Matter and a range of solidarity movements held massive protests and demonstrations calling for an end to police violence against Black communities and communities of color, and for the institutional and structural changes required to address the inequities made bare by the COVID-19 pandemic.

These racialized realities were, of course, experienced in Oregon as well, and felt by the OSU community. Throughout the Summer of 2020, groups of BIPOC students and faculty and staff of color presented a number of formal calls for OSU to respond to the unprecedented moment of “racial reckoning,” and to take forceful action, in kind, towards the anti-racist transformation of its institutional culture, policies, and practices. The prevailing sentiment behind these calls for change was one of “if not now, when?” While many OSU and community groups called for various kinds of antiracist action in/by the University, the *Racism and Antiracism Curriculum Taskforce* was charged jointly by Provost Ed Feser and then Faculty Senate President Dwaine Plaza in response to the antiracism education calls presented by BIPOC students and others.

The taskforce began to meet in Fall 2020, with Alix Gitelman (then Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education) and Marta Maldonado (Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies) as Co-Chairs. In convening the taskforce, the co-chairs sought representation across colleges, instructional faculty and faculty/staff on the co-curricular side, and faculty from both the Corvallis and Cascades campuses. The taskforce was to include BIPOC faculty and faculty with experience in antiracist pedagogy. Finally, we sought undergraduate and graduate student representation. We ended up with a 13-member taskforce, including two student members (see Appendix A for a list of taskforce members and their college and unit affiliations).

OSU is not the only institution facing a pressing need to amend the curriculum in ways that are reflective of and responsive to the social realities of racism and social inequities. Many universities across the United States are presently engaged in serious re-thinking and re-strategizing, seeking to carve out adequate and sustainable paths toward anti-racist transformation of the curriculum, and of other aspects of institutional life. And all of this is unfolding in the context of ongoing financial and logistic challenges. The Chronicle of Higher Education's just published report, *A Curriculum That Matters: How Colleges*

*and Universities are Teaching Society's Most Pressing Problems* illustrates precisely this *shared* nature of the challenge facing institutions of higher education. The report illustrates both the enormity and complexity of the task before us, but also some of the ways in which different institutions are beginning to respond, in ways that connect to their particular missions, their uniqueness, and the communities they serve. We envision the work of the OSU *Racism and Antiracism Curriculum Taskforce* as linked to and informed by this broader collective effort to enhance higher education's ability to prepare learners to engage the most pressing societal problems.

## **PROCESS, KEY QUESTIONS, AND EMERGENT CONSIDERATIONS**

Following the charge by Provost Feser and then Senate President Plaza, the taskforce met every two weeks and held discussions on the *challenges and opportunities* associated with:

- Including an antiracism requirement in the Baccalaureate Core;
- Incorporating antiracism education in graduate education;
- Requiring Difference, Power, and Discrimination (DPD) courses be satisfied within a student's academic home;
- Establishing standards and shared responsibilities for antiracism education;
- Mandating participation of instructors and other personnel who interact with students in learning and other situations (e.g., labs and fieldwork) in regular antiracist training.

Given that the *Racism and Antiracism Curriculum Taskforce* was charged in response to student demands regarding antiracism education, we sought to ensure that we understood and were responsive to the spirit of such demands. To do this, we reviewed the charge given to us as well as the demands submitted to the OSU President, the Provost, and the Office of Institutional Diversity (OID). We also extended an invitation to BIPOC students from multiple organizations among those that presented racial justice demands to OSU administration in Summer 2020, and to other students with an ongoing interest in addressing questions of racial justice on campus. Students were invited to attend a meeting of the taskforce and share the concerns behind their calls for action, and the kinds of changes they hope to see at OSU. Despite our best efforts, only three students participated, though they provided valuable insights. Student concerns were also represented in the taskforce by the two student members. Based on input from students, and on the charge given the taskforce, several considerations emerged in taskforce discussions and remained at the fore throughout the taskforce work: the need to keep a structural/institutional focus, the need to counteract "siloining," and the implications of these considerations for the pace of change.

### Structural Focus and the Need to Counteract Siloining

In calling for antiracist transformation of the curriculum and of "education" at OSU, students are calling for more than just a "quick fix." They are calling for deep institutional transformation, so that antiracism infuses every aspect of learning at OSU. For this taskforce, the implications of this expectation are manifold. On the one hand, teaching (and learning) do not occur only in classrooms, and antiracism cannot be contained in the curriculum alone. Likewise, BIPOC students want to see themselves and their communities represented in the curriculum in *all* their various fields of study and interest, not just in one or a few courses. In other words, antiracist education is not and cannot be present in one or even a few courses, and altogether absent in others. Questions of race and racism (and antiracism), however, are not typically engaged across all of academia, and this is certainly the case at OSU. The taskforce felt compelled to consider the extent to which faculty across the disciplines (and in various student-facing roles) are prepared and willing to engage questions of racism and antiracism *within* their fields and pedagogy. And, perhaps more essentially, we discussed the concern that some faculty from different

disciplines and of different ethnoracial backgrounds may not be willing, or see the need to engage the idea that race and racism are pertinent and integral to work within their fields, to their teaching, and to their interaction with students. For example, the number of bias reports involving racially-charged classroom situations suggests that training would be beneficial for faculty across campus.

It became clear to taskforce members that an antiracist transformation of education at OSU must extend beyond the addition of one or more course requirements, to a transformation of curriculum and pedagogical practice *across the board*. We believe that separating (or siloing) discussions of curricular change from other discussions about, for example, recruitment and retention of faculty of color, faculty development, and tenure and promotion policies, ignores the institutional and systemic nature of race and racism in the university context. So, while the charge given to the taskforce was specifically about curricular change, a key consideration is that such change is necessarily connected to broader antiracist institutional transformation. Components essential to institutional transformation are:

1. Recruitment and retention of BIPOC faculty and staff;
2. Clearly articulated commitment to systemic change from University Administration, with adequate resources to demonstrate that commitment;
3. Examination of budget and financial priorities that may perpetuate systemic racism;
4. Required and on-going professional development for faculty and staff around antiracism, classroom inclusivity, and navigating conversations and interactions with sensitivity and attention to differences—this may entail changes to promotion and tenure policies;
5. Intentional injection of antiracist content and reflection throughout our curriculum and programming, across Colleges and disciplinary fields;
6. Identifying and remedying unintended and counterproductive consequences (i.e., racist in outcome/impact) of institutional policies and practices, including antiracist initiatives. For example—the ways in which an antiracist course, done poorly, can actually traumatize BIPOC students (as documented by an ample research literature).

#### “Quick Fixes” and the Pacing of Antiracist Institutional/Structural Transformation

Admittedly, deep institutional transformation does not, *cannot* happen overnight. It requires reimagining of policies, practices, and culture across the board, which happen gradually and slowly. This is not to say that some changes cannot be made right away, or that we cannot act swiftly on some matters, but that we need to be intentional about thinking structurally in designing and implementing antiracist change, and in considering the consequences of such change. A longer path to antiracist curricular (and) institutional change may clash with prevailing expectations many, including students, have around quick and forceful action. To address this challenge, the taskforce recognizes a need for transparency, open communication, and continued engagement with various stakeholders, so that the process of planning, and the timing of implementation can be visible and understood.

Anchored with the understanding that an antiracist course or limited-in-scope curricular initiative, in isolation, will not deliver the broad transformation we are aiming for, the taskforce discussed the following aspects of antiracist curriculum development at OSU:

- Scope and substance (What is an antiracist curriculum?);
- Necessary outcomes (What should an antiracist curriculum accomplish for different student audiences?);
- Key challenges and opportunities for development and implementation.

In the next section, we provide greater detail around each of these bullets, and we offer recommendations, or next steps related to them.

## **WHERE WE ARE AND NEXT STEPS**

The good news is that we are not starting from scratch. From the get go, the taskforce discussed the need to acknowledge and honor the work that is already being done at OSU that is consonant with and/or explicitly informed by anti-racist principles, and that provides various forms of affirmation and support for our BIPOC students. This entails work undertaken within and without academic units—curricular and co-curricular efforts, and a range of programs and initiatives. It makes sense to build on that which we already have. One concern that came up in taskforce conversations, however, is that all too often, efforts to engage race and racism on campus seem disparate or disconnected, another manifestation of the siloing mentioned above. The taskforce discussed the need to have an ongoing inventory of programs and initiatives across campus to know what’s already in place, where it is taking place on campus, and the need for on-going evaluations of these efforts.

As noted earlier, racism and antiracism are concerns that are presumed to fall or “fit” within particular academic fields (Ethnic Studies and/or some areas within the social sciences and/or the humanities). In fact, historically, most academic fields have simply not engaged questions of race and racism in teaching and/or research, as such questions have been perceived as not pertinent to the subject matter, tangential, or even irrelevant. But we find ourselves in a sociohistorical moment that calls for a new paradigm, one that requires that we grow and strengthen the capacity for anti-racist engagement in pedagogy (and research, etc.) across Colleges, Schools, and academic units. To do this in a thoughtful way, demands further thinking and strategizing, as we must account for a number of considerations (e.g., how to create faculty buy-in/counter resistance, need for continued training and faculty development, etc.).

Some universities have begun the work of across-the-board curricular transformation by creating rubrics to infuse their entire curriculum with racial equity/anti-racist content (e.g., Whitman College). Others are encouraging faculty across fields to rethink and redesign existing courses, or creating entirely new courses (special topics courses and new additions to the permanent curriculum, some involving co-teaching across fields (e.g., Whitman College, Dillard University, Montclair State). Also, curricular changes are not being implemented in isolation. Given the necessary interconnectedness of teaching and research, some universities have created cross-disciplinary research programs focused on key questions of race and equity (e.g., UC Irvine) and racial justice research funds (e.g., Indiana University), with an eye towards enabling research projects that can eventually lead to external funding. Also, institutions are simultaneously launching BIPOC faculty recruitment efforts through cluster hiring.

There is no one-size-fits-all path to antiracist curricular transformation. We at OSU need to ascertain together what types of curricular change will work here, what associated incentives and initiatives are feasible and adequate and consonant with our strengths and foci, our strategic goals, and the needs of our students.

In what follows, we outline some next steps in three time-frames—immediate, mid-range, and long-range. We recognize that some steps are already being considered among different groups at the university.

### Immediate Steps

During Fall term 2021, taskforce members should engage with the Bacc Core 2.1 Committee to discuss incorporation of a course or courses—potentially through enhancements to the DPD program—in the revision of the Bacc Core currently underway in Faculty Senate. Some important considerations in these conversations include, but are not limited to:

- a. Rising tuition costs (students do not want to pay for more credits), but one course may be insufficient;
- b. Number of credits (difficult to teach subject as 1-credit course);
- c. Ensuring those who teach these courses have adequate experience and preparation;
- d. With few or no BIPOC faculty, BIPOC students in predominantly white classrooms often have to deal with racial dynamics on their own;
- e. A standing committee of the Faculty Senate including members of the Taskforce and the Diversity Council could prioritize deliberations and discussions on this.

### Mid-Range Steps

Identify steps to enhance the pedagogical capacity for faculty to engage antiracism in each major. Work with units that already have some infrastructure and expertise in place (DPD, ES, CTL, OID).

Considerations:

- a. Resources to enable this type of faculty engagement and commitment to change;
- b. Training and faculty development opportunities;
- c. Addressing faculty resistance, creating buy-in especially among senior faculty;
- d. Drawing from existing resources.

### Long-range Steps

To lay the foundation for institution-wide cultural change, here are some possible actions:

- Leadership messaging and resourcing focused on antiracism in pedagogy, research, and other aspects of university life.
- Create incentives for change, appealing across fields (maybe targeted).
- Consider what other institutions have done, and identify unique opportunities relevant to the state.
- Host university-wide events that raise awareness of systemic racism and foster conversations about a different path forward (e.g., host faculty reading groups on antiracism, classroom climate, and inclusive pedagogy).
- Create a curated list of terms and definitions around diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, racism/antiracism to serve as a resource for university stakeholders and another avenue for conversations on these topics (see Appendix B).
- Produce an edited volume that brings together the knowledge and experience of faculty, staff, and administrators working on anti-racism on their respective campuses.
- Host a symposium/conference (“Working Toward an Antiracist University”) on campus in 2023 that brings together contributors to the edited volume to share their work and engage in a conversation open to the whole campus.

Should there be a need for continued work by the task force in the 2021-22 academic year, we have provided a draft charge (see Appendix C) for the task force to initiate work on the steps listed here.

## Appendix A: AY21 Taskforce charge and membership

### *Charge by the Provost and Faculty Senate President*

The Task Force will review and recommend changes to current OSU curricular and co-curricular offerings to ensure that, as part of their OSU experience, ALL students learn critical thinking on race/ethnicity, multiple racisms—their historical origins and present-day manifestations—and antiracism. The Task Force will identify existing curricular offerings that already engage issues of race critically, and develop ways to amplify and enhance their reach. It will also identify spaces across campus where opportunities to engage issues of race and racism in the curriculum need to be developed or strengthened.

Among other responsibilities, the task force will consider and advise on the following proposals:

- Including an anti-racism requirement in the Baccalaureate Core;
- Incorporating anti-racism education in graduate education;
- Requiring DPD courses be satisfied within a student's academic home;
- Establishing standards and shared responsibilities for anti-racism education;
- Mandated participation of instructors in Black Minds Matter training.

Other proposals may be raised by task force members and other stakeholders. Given the scope and breadth of the task force's potential work, its First Task will be to establish a work plan with milestones and an associated timeline for completed work. In addition, the Task Force may charge small working groups to tackle different proposals, and membership of those working groups may include faculty, students, or staff not on the Task Force.

The co-chairs of the Task Force will make periodic reports to the Executive Committee of Faculty Senate as well as to the Provost.

### *AY21 Taskforce Members:*

Alix Gitelman, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (co-chair)  
Marta Maldonado, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies (co-chair)  
Teresita Alvarez-Cortez, Director of Diversity Initiatives & Programs, UHDS  
Bradley Boovy, Associate Professor, WGSS; Acting DPD Director  
Eduardo Cotilla-Sanchez, Associate Professor, EECS  
Allison Davis-White Eyes, Director of Diversity & Cultural Engagement, OID  
Sienna Kaske, Undergraduate student in Ethnic Studies and Writing  
Brittany King, Graduate student, Fisheries and Wildlife  
Erika McCalpine, Instructor in COB, OSU-Cascades  
Patti Sakurai, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies  
Dana Sanchez, Associate Professor, Fisheries and Wildlife  
Dorian Smith, Asst Director of Black Access and Success, EOP  
Luhui Whitebear, Asst Director of Native American Longhouse Eena Haws

## Appendix B: Description of Glossary/Online Tool

Early in work of the taskforce, it became clear that one basic challenge we faced, and a challenge that extends beyond the taskforce, is the lack of a shared language. We set out to develop a glossary (as an ongoing activity), to accomplish the following goals:

1. Clarify our approach and work to members of the campus community who have different levels of familiarity with concepts and realities of race and racism, their various forms or manifestations, and how these have functioned and changed from the historical past to the present;
2. Acknowledge and engage with the fact that racial terms and ideas are always contested and evolving, within and without the university context;
3. Identify a *shared vocabulary* to anchor the task force's direction and efforts;
4. Connect our work to existing bodies of knowledge and ongoing academic and public debates about race, racism, and anti-racism.

The glossary began as a collection of terms and definitions to be shared with interested stakeholders. However, we plan for it to become a living, dynamic document, because race and racism and related language are constantly changing. Eventually, we intend for the glossary to become an interactive (and also dynamic) **online learning tool** for students, faculty, staff, and the broader community, incorporating media, highlighting the complexity and relationality of racialized experiences, and situating/placing race in OSU and Oregon. The glossary will go beyond defining key terms to give a sense of racialized lived experiences at OSU and in Oregon, and to illustrate race, racism and antiracism as integral to spaces and interactions within the university.

The Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) has already created and published a brief initial list of relevant terms connected to diversity and inclusion on campus. The ongoing work of a subcommittee of the taskforce aims to support and deepen this and other DEI efforts at OSU. The Racism and Antiracism Glossary and (eventual) online space we are proposing/pursuing aims to make the complex and dynamic language of antiracism more accessible to students and faculty at OSU.

## Appendix C: Proposed Charge for AY22

In AY22, the Taskforce will take several concrete steps:

1. During Fall term 2021, taskforce members will engage with the Bacc Core 2.1 Committee to discuss incorporation of a course or courses—potentially through enhancements to the DPD program—in the revision of the Bacc Core currently underway in Faculty Senate.
2. Bring together representatives from DPD, Ethnic Studies, OID, and the CTL to identify actionable steps to enhance capacity for faculty to engage antiracism in classrooms and in each major.
3. Advise interim and new CDO on a plan to address issues of siloing discussed in this report.
4. Recommend to the Provost a series of campus activities to encourage engagement with antiracism among faculty across campus and different student groups.
5. Recommend to the Provost programming and incentives to encourage a culture of antiracism at all levels, among all segments of the university community.
6. Publish and initial version of the Glossary/Online Tool on Racism and Antiracism by end of year.