



Faculty statement on systemic racism and racial equity

Adopted by the Faculty Senate, August 21, 2020

We, the faculty of the University of South Carolina Beaufort, affirm that our long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion is a necessary but not entirely sufficient condition for addressing the impact of systemic racism and achieving equality for all members of our society. Further, we acknowledge that while a commitment and a desire for equality is important, the way to actually secure equality is to use the vehicle of equity. Whereas equality is about sameness and fairness, equity is about difference and justice; equality is the end, while equity is the means¹. Equity refers to the provision of goods, services and interactions in ways that reduce (and ultimately eliminate) disparity, marginalization, and discrimination while increasing social and political inclusion².

In our work towards the achievement of racial equity, we commit to being comfortable with being uncomfortable. We understand that we are not experts on the topic of systemic racism, nor can we become experts over the course of a few months. However, we can commit to engaging in purposeful efforts to learn more broadly and deeply about the historical and contemporary impacts of ideas regarding race-based privilege and disadvantage. We can also commit to learning with and from our students, many of whom are in the process of developing ways to give voice to their frustrations with racialized marginalization. We understand that there will be challenging moments in and out of the classroom, for all during this learning process.

Our University's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, African American History Month series, and African American Studies courses are valuable and necessary tools in this strategy, but they are not enough for our purposes. Therefore, we commit to incorporating difficult and important topics throughout our teaching, research and service activities, for each of our respective disciplines. Whether it be a focus on epigenetics in Nursing and Public Health, anti-Black linguistic traditions in English, the dominance of Eurocentric epistemologies in History, the white savior complex in Religion and study abroad programs, the lingering influence of eugenics in Biology, philanthropic redlining in the Human Services sector, the propagation of subservience in Hospitality and Tourism, the impact of the digital divide in Computer Sciences, the connection between exploitation and capitalism in Business, cultural appropriation and erasure in the Arts, biased media portrayals in Communications, race-based disciplinary disparities in Education, or racialized policing and sentencing disparities which have shaped our criminal justice policy and related pedagogies - no discipline or area of study has the monopoly on systemic racism, and none should be exempt from calls to mitigate its negative impacts on society.

We fully recognize that as individuals, and as an organization, we are not to blame for the origins of systemic racism. We also understand that as members of the academy, we have an out-sized responsibility to learn and teach about the impacts of systemic racism, and work earnestly toward its eventual eradication in the future. It will not be easy to attain this goal, but it is possible if we are committed, courageous, and steadfast in its pursuit.

¹ Thomas, N. (2019, January) In Service of Social Equity: Leveraging the Experiences of African American Women Professors. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 25(1), 185-206.

² Blessett, B., Fudge, M., & Gaynor, T. S. (2017). Moving from Theory to Practice: An Evaluative Assessment of Society Equity Approaches. Submitted to Center for Accountability and Performance and National Academy for Public Administration's Standing Panel on Social Equity in Governance.