

Psychology Faculty Action Steps in Response to Black Students Organizations Statement

2020-2021 Academic Year Update

During the Summer of 2020, we posted a [letter](#) in response to Black students' [calls](#) for justice and change on our campus. In that letter we outlined six action items that we hoped to address during the academic year 2020-21. Many of these actions will require ongoing work. Below we detail how we have begun to address these goals over the past year, as well as a self-evaluation of our progress towards each.

1. Hire outside consultation to promote equity in hiring practices of psychology faculty and recruitment of Black faculty, ideally in collaboration with other departments who have the same hiring needs.

We have not been able to hire outside consultation. However, we have 1) collected data on faculty search diversity, 2) reviewed search materials for job announcements and review rubrics and suggested modifications and changes for upcoming searches, and 3) voted as a department in favor of two hires (for a Cognitive Psychologist, and an open-area hire in collaboration with Women and Gender Studies) that are designed to serve the needs of our diverse students.

We have been approved for the search for a Cognitive Psychologist. Additionally, the suggestions for modifications regarding job announcements and review rubrics have been followed for this search.

We have much room to grow in terms of recruiting and hiring diverse faculty. We also have room to grow to working towards creating a space that will be supportive and enriching for such faculty members.

2. Provide anti-racism training for faculty and staff (with ongoing accountability groups), and training around awareness of and addressing of anti-Black racism.

During our Fall Faculty Retreat, we scheduled and participated in an anti-racism workshop facilitated by Undoing Racism, the Seattle-based anti-racism training organization recommended by the President's Council on Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice ([EISJ in its June 12, 2020 report to the university](#)). Various faculty members participated in Academics for Black Survival and Wellness in Summer 2020 and Summer 2021. In AY 2020-2021, the Center for Cross-Cultural Research sponsored three speakers who all addressed issues of race and racism in their talks and workshops. Our IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Action Committee) has maintained an Events Teams Channel, and various faculty and staff have participated in IDEA-related trainings and events throughout the year. We have a Department Book Club that focuses on readings about anti-racism. We have also regularly devoted faculty meeting time to discussing IDEA issues and have bi-weekly Brown Bags sponsored by the IDEA committee. Those Brown Bags have covered the following topics:

- Creating equity-minded faculty workloads
- Addressing bias in teaching evaluations

- How to proactively and reactively address microaggressions in the classroom, especially for faculty of different positionalities
- Responding in the classroom to hate-based violence and current national political events
- Conducting a “power analysis” of the department (based on Undoing Racism training for faculty and staff)
- Applying holistic evaluation processes for faculty reviews and hiring

We also surveyed the psychology faculty about perceptions of IDEA readiness and skills in Fall 2020 to plan for events over the course of the school year. We plan to re-survey faculty in Fall 2021 to assess change over time, and current needs.

We are heartened by the engagement of many of our faculty and staff in these issues, and we know that we are all in different places on this journey. However, although there has been a lot of activity and opportunity for participating in activities related to anti-racism, we are not able to require such participation, which is a barrier to be addressed (especially in number 3 below).

3. Integrate anti-racist educator self-assessment, action, and ongoing accountability in the Department Evaluation Plan (DEP).

We have consulted with the DEP Task Force, and provided language for incorporating IDEA principles and practices into the Psychology DEP, which means that faculty would be required to engage in such work for promotion and tenure. We have developed and passed a Department values statement focused on IDEA issues, which will guide the Development of the DEP.

Although we have made some progress here, we view this as one of our most important actions for next year. We have not come far enough towards integrating and infusing IDEA into our Department culture.

4. Assess the recruitment and the barriers to entry to the undergraduate majors, and the effect those have on Black students. Adjust major application procedures in a way that addresses inequities in students admitted to the major and underrepresentation of Black students in the major.

We have examined psychology undergraduate admissions data at WWU; consulted with UW about their undergraduate admissions process; and consulted with the Psychology Scholarship Committee to promote IDEA in the scholarship application evaluation process.

The changes to the scholarship process were a major and positive change. However, like #3 above, changes to our admissions processes are central to upcoming work. We have not done enough to address the inequities to admissions and representation in the major. This action is important for systemic change within the Psychology Department and we are committed to this important change during the 21-22 academic year.

5. Diversify authors included in the curriculum, with increased representation of and engagement with work by scholars of color, including Black women and trans people of color.

Individual faculty have done this in their classes, but we have not had a Department level discussion of this. Part of this may come with changes to the DEP. However, this is a major area for growth, as a group.

6. Assess the barriers to admission to our graduate programs, and the effect those have on Black students. Address graduate program recruitment and application process to address any inequities that could be contributing to the underrepresentation of Black students and other students of color in the graduate programs.

We have examined psychology graduate admissions data at WWU, and revised admissions processes/mission statements for all three Master's Programs. We have provided professional development opportunities on IDEA topics with M.S. Experimental Psychology students. Additionally, the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs both removed the GRE from admissions requirements, as scores on these standardized tests are highly correlated with family income level and perpetuate societal inequalities, and poorly estimate student ability to be successful with graduate-level coursework.

Next year will be an important year in evaluating how changes to admissions impacts recruitment and retention of diverse students. We also need to continue to work with our students to provide opportunities for personal growth, development, and training on these issues.

We have also:

- Investigated possibility of creating a community ambassador program (like that in the College of Science and Engineering) for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The goal of this group would be to conduct college-level IDEA work, with ambassadors from each department in CHSS providing resources and support for marginalized students, staff, and faculty.
- Similarly, we endorse the ongoing need for greater centralized DEI leadership at Western, elaborated further in a statement drafted by Andrea Peterson, Associate Dean, Western Libraries, and Shevell Thibou, Director of Teaching & Learning, Western Libraries, "The need for central DEI leadership at Western."

Goals for the 2021-2022 Academic Year:

- Support department leadership in revising our admission requirements to a more holistic approach (that doesn't focus on GPA alone).
- Support the Cognitive Search Committee in recruitment of a deep and diverse pool of applicants (including but not limited to help with the hiring announcement, ways in which bias may impact application review, and faculty-wide recommendations on how to

support applicants when they visit campus). Support the Search Committee by providing advice on the evaluation rubric and updated information to guide the interview process.

- Review and support of equitable service workload for faculty. Preliminary data has been collected and evidence-based recommendations need to be made to address inequitable service amongst faculty (see [O'Meara et al., 2021](#)). This does/will have an impact on marginalized faculty members' experience within the department, ultimately impacting students.
- Develop and share an IDEA section of the Psychology website to promote the work we are doing in a transparent manner, while providing a space to share resources with students, staff and faculty.
- Increase departmental awareness and representation of BIPOC psychologists (particularly Black and Indigenous scholars) doing original and innovative work in Psychology.
- Support the new BIPOC Psychology and Behavioral Neuroscience student group.
- Continue to develop and host department Brown Bag meetings, about 3 times a quarter, for faculty to consult, support, teach, and promote growth through IDEA related topics.
- Support faculty to continue to decolonize and indigenize their classrooms and other interactions with students (i.e., labs, advising, clubs).