# STUDENT LIFE

# ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION PLAN

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
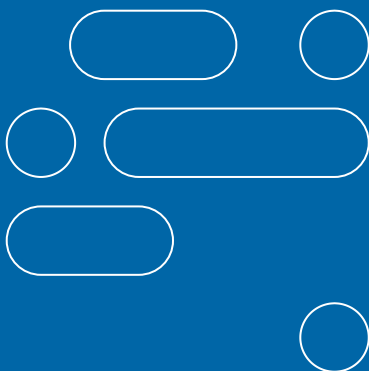**STUDENT LIFE**

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# INTRODUCTION

In September 2020, Vice President for Student Life José-Luis Riera convened the Advancing Racial Equity and Inclusion (AREI) Committee to develop a strategic plan of crystallized anti-racism related action items. The strategic plan will direct the Division of Student Life on how and where to embed anti-racism into the context of student affairs work: student support, engagement and success. The strategic plan will also serve to "reset" the Division of Student Life's work around diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice to yield measurable and meaningful change.

As an outcome of the AREI Committee's work, action items centered on supporting and serving students, and equipping and supporting staff. To guide the action items of supporting and serving students, the committee considered the following questions:

- How do we center our work on racially and ethnically minoritized (i.e., Black, Latinx, Asian, Desi, Pacific Islander and Native or Indigenous) students?

- What do we want racially and ethnically minoritized students to say about the campus climate and culture? What work is necessary to achieve this and how do we get there?

- How do we focus on identifying the systems and examining policies that result in inequitable outcomes that perpetuate racism within the Division of Student Life?

- What is the role of acknowledging the intersectionality of students' identities?

As a guide to the action items of equipping and supporting staff, the committee focused the Division's responsibility to lead the student experience. Therefore, the action items for staff looked at the sustained development of staff competencies and ongoing expectations of staff engagement in the work of anti-racism, diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice.

# PROCESS

Vice President for Student Life José-Luis Riera charged the AREI Committee on September 25, 2020. The committee was made up of 12 Division of Student Life staff members. The invitations were made based on representation of lived experiences, expertise and Divisional functional areas.

During the initial conversations as a committee, members expressed explicit concerns on the implementation of the plan. The committee acknowledged that past diversity, equity and inclusion efforts were short-lived and/or did not produce the desired embedded change. Therefore, the committee was purposeful in its design of identified action items, to include metrics, priority order, potential barriers and resources needed to achieve the actions.

On February 23, 2021, the committee shared their work to-date at the Division of Student Life Town Hall meeting, and committee members co-facilitated informal breakouts to obtain additional feedback and insights from Student Life staff. The committee used the feedback to categorize and refine the action items.

During the time of the committee's work, an anonymous Instagram account was started by anonymous UD students. The account was titled Speak Up Delaware and became a platform

for students to speak up about their experiences with racism, sexual assault, physical violence, mental health concerns, suicidality and their overall student experiences at UD. To listen and amplify students' voices, a subset of the AREI Committee and the Division of Student Life's Assessment Council (SLAC), explored Speak Up Delaware's posts of race and racism between June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2022.

Between April 18–29, 2022, a Student Voice survey was conducted and UD students were asked to prioritize the AREI supporting and serving students action items. The Student Voice survey garnered 344 respondents and provided information-rich data on the priority-order of student-based action items.

# DEFINITIONS

The AREI Committee chose to use anti-racism as the framework to act on the charge. This plan serves as the Division of Student Life's commitment to anti-racism and recognition of race and racism as embedded within the individual, institutional and greater sociopolitical structure. To do that work effectively, the committee recognized the importance of clear definitions to crystallize and standardize both the work of the committee and the work of the Division of Student Life. The committee adopted the following definitions to launch this strategic plan:

**Anti-racism:** Fighting against racism in all forms, including but not limited to individual, interpersonal, institutional and structural (National African American Museum of History and Culture; nmaahc.si.edu; Retrieved July 2021). Anti-racism requires naming, identifying and tearing down systems of oppression and building up systems of access, equity and inclusion.

**Racism:** The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on socially constructed racial human hierarchy that privileges white people. Racism systematically results in inequitable rights, access to resources and ultimately life outcomes based on race.

**Anti-Blackness:** Anti-Blackness is a two-part formation that both strips Blackness of value (dehumanizes), and systematically marginalizes Black people.

**Intersectionality:** The interplay of a person's social identities that result in the compounding of oppressive societal dynamics.

**Minoritized:** This term is used "to signify the social construction of underrepresentation and subordination in U.S. social institutions, including colleges and universities. Persons are not born into a minority status, nor are they minoritized in every social context (e.g., their families, racially homogenous friendship groups or places of worship). Instead, they are rendered minorities in particular situations and institutional environments that sustain an overrepresentation of whiteness." (Harper, 2012, p.9).

# ACTION ITEMS

The following are action items by theme and priority-order, identified through the Division of Student Life Town Hall, the Speak Up Delaware study and the Student Voice survey.

- Supporting & Serving Students Framework Grid

- Equipping and Supporting Staff Framework Grid

## FUNDING & HUMAN RESOURCES

## Supporting & Serving Students

- Assess financial barriers or inequities for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students that prevent completion or active engagement and develop strategies to address it.

- Provide financial incentives (e.g., tuition, room and board, stipends, etc.) to individual student leaders within professionally advised RSOs working to build affinity spaces and community for students by race and racial identities.

- Provide financial incentives (e.g., tuition, room and board, stipends, etc.) to individual students who serve in formal advisory roles for campus committees/groups related to racial equity and inclusion.

- Increase paid (wage or work study) paraprofessional positions on campus (vs. relying on internships and volunteers) and compensating students for their involvement versus just the leadership opportunity.

- Create racial justice funding opportunities through the student allocations board (as a set-aside), available to student organizations for racial justice programming.

## Equipping & Supporting Staff

- Develop tools, standards, policies and best practices to ensure equity throughout the employee life cycle, including search/hiring and compensation throughout the employee's tenure in the Division and exit processes; search committee training and composition, providing resources/tools to use in equity in search processes; develop standard questions to incorporate into all Student Life hiring processes (mandate standard diversity, equity and inclusion questions for all searches) exit processes (include mandatory diversity, equity and inclusion questions in exit interviews).

- Regular, ongoing Division-wide compensation/salary review and adjustments as necessary to ensure equity beyond position classification (e.g., race, gender).

- Create two new, full-time positions: a senior leadership position (Asst. Vice President) and a Project Manager, to support all units of Student Life in actualizing these goals and anti-racism action items identified by the AREI Committee.

- Develop and embed anti-racism tenets into position descriptions consistently across the Division.

BOB HORTON

## Supporting & Serving Students

- Allow professionally advised RSOs to apply for additional racial justice funds through student allocations board, regardless of their existing allocations.

- Allocate a percentage of Student Life department budgets to ensure that all departments are supporting racial diversity activities at the departmental level and centrally at the divisional level.

- Provide funding and staffing towards creating safe and brave spaces where students of color suffering from bias, racial battle fatigue and/or traumatic incidents can find community, advocacy, connection to campus partners and healing.

## Equipping & Supporting Staff

- Audit and rewrite of appraisals to include key performance indicators related to racial equity.



## CAMPUS CLIMATE, SPACE & ASSESSMENT

## Supporting & Serving Students

- Apply equity-minded assessment practices (e.g., proactive student involvement, uncovering outcome gaps, equity embedded at all levels and stages of assessment) to generate and use data to serve students of color/racially minoritized student communities in tangible ways within Student Life units and at the Divisional level.

- Advocate for transparency and partnerships with University of Delaware Police Department related to the racial climate and culture on campus.

## Equipping & Supporting Staff

- Assess measures of identity and racism with Black and ethnically underrepresented Student Life staff. Utilize an external consultant to understand experiences with race and racism as Black identifying/racially minoritized Student Life staff.

- Develop a standardized departmental self-assessment tool to evaluate individual and departmental approaches to routine work and make anti-racism integrated changes on an annual basis.

## Supporting & Serving Students

- Formally catalog physical spaces on campus to audit annually to determine the extent to which they communicate the value of racial equity, track and document progress and changes.

- Create physical racial affinity spaces for community building and gathering spaces.

- Create an annual Division of Student Life anti-racism survey and focus groups/interviews to better understand how students of color are experiencing Student Life units (and other student-serving areas across campus) and implement changes based on the feedback.

## Equipping & Supporting Staff

- Articulate current campus racial climate and culture experiences for students and why it is relevant and important to the work that we do. Provide a semester update on racism as it pertains to students. Review relevant climate survey data, as well as other assessment (i.e. Speak Up Delaware analysis from Student Life Assessment Council); identify literature/research that signifies connection importance to Student Life's work.

- Conduct audit of staff awareness and understanding of racism/anti-racism to guide training and other professional development activities.

- Develop and administer a Divisional staff climate and culture survey with specific questions related to experiences and expectations with race and racism.

## EDUCATION & TRAINING

## Supporting & Serving Students

- Create a multi-week anti-racism workshop for all students with external support and resources for building it; include training on undocumented students and families (with a focus on racism) and accomplices; certification programs for students.

- Develop ongoing anti-racism training for all student workers within Student Life.

- Establish social justice and identity-based training for student leaders across all RSOs.

- After establishing a bias incident process, conduct bias incident training for all student workers.

## Equipping & Supporting Staff

- Provide historical knowledge of racism within U.S. culture, Delaware and the University of Delaware. Develop common language necessary to advance anti-racism priorities (e.g., anti-racism, anti-Blackness, equity).

- Provide training and resources to help staff understand the importance of and how to support the identity development of African Americans and underrepresented students.

- Conduct bi-annual anti-racism training for all professional staff and establish four (4) Divisional in-service days reserved for staff and professional training and development, using student and staff data to inform training priorities. Deliver multiple modes of training: online module(s), interactive session(s), readings, etc. on racial identity development, systemic and institutionalized nature of racism, racism in the workplace, effective tools and strategies to address racism.

# POLICIES, PROCEDURES & ACCOUNTABILITY

## Supporting & Serving Students

- Create a process for explicitly addressing incidents of racism nationally and locally, including at UD when they occur; should come from the Vice President for Student Life's Office.

- Build a detailed, strong code of conduct policy that addresses racist acts and statements on campus to create a process of accountability; it is crucial to recognize that these acts of racism impact Black, Indigenous and students of color's ability to persist, feel a sense of safety and belonging and graduate at University of Delaware.

- Establish an online bias, harassment and hate crime reporting process that is anonymous, with clear and transparent procedures related to what happens when students report their concerns.

- Develop and implement anti-racism strategies in recruitment and retention of students in leadership positions (e.g. orientation leaders, resident assistants, etc.).

- Conduct a comprehensive external review of security at student and other campus-sponsored events to assess the need and function for University of Delaware Police Department resources during these events.

- Advocate for partnerships with suppliers, vendors and local businesses (e.g., restaurants) who value and embed anti-racism in their services and work using an established criterion, and transparently communicate these relationships with students and staff.

- Partner with Aramark to advocate for changes in catering policy to be able to use local businesses that are equipped at providing authentic cultural foods.

## Equipping & Supporting Staff

- Institute a formal anti-racist review process for new and existing Division and departmental policies, standard operating procedures, regulations, and guidelines.
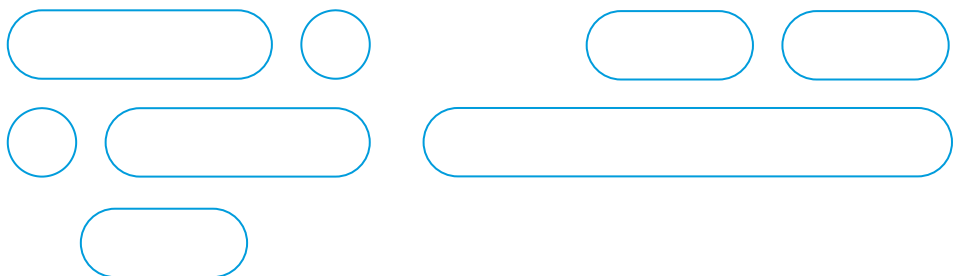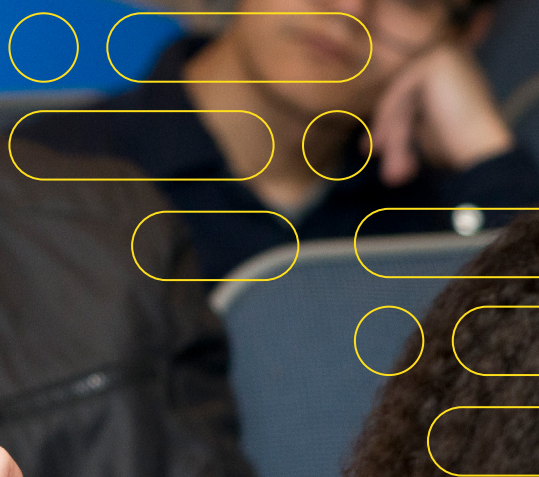
# COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION-SHARING

## Supporting & Serving Students

- Create a public commitment website containing tangible anti-racism resources and space for students, staff and faculty to give feedback on Student Life anti-racism efforts.

- Develop a communication plan to share annual results, achievements, updates and areas for improvement on our public commitment to anti-racism and equity; ensure it is disseminated in a clear and concise manner and hold an expectation that updates are effectively shared with students.

- Conduct annual audit of virtual communications (email, websites, etc.) to examine the extent to which they communicate a value of racial equity; track and document progress and changes.

## Equipping & Supporting Staff

- Establish a digital anti-racism resource center on Student Life HenQuarters that contains resources and information for Student Life staff.

# ACCOUNTABILITY

To ensure these action items are implemented, over the course of this strategic plan, AREI Committee stressed the need for internal and external accountability measures. The foundation for accountability includes full commitment from the Division of Student Life Leadership Teams with clear expectations of engagement, as well as consistent and transparent communication with students and staff. Two internal accountability partner groups should include students and members from the AREI Committee. As a suggestion, the student accountability group should include student leaders as well as students that may not be in leadership positions. The student group should be diverse, and representative of the audiences addressed in the recommendations. The second internal group should be the AREI Committee or a sub-group of this committee that will meet bi-annually to review the progress made, gaps and areas of opportunity. As for external accountability, the partnership group recommended including constant and structured outreach to the Educational Advisory Board (EAB), institutional benchmarks and external consultants. As an institutional partner of EAB, the Division of Student Life can leverage this resource as a consultant and accountability partner to ensure that the action items, strategies and goals align with best practices that will yield positive and impactful results.

# NEXT STEPS

To move this strategic plan forward, over the course of Fall 2022, the Committee recommends the following next steps:

- Assemble and charge a new AREI implementation accountability team with invitations based on representation of lived experiences, expertise and Division of Student Life functional areas, student leaders and campus partners.

- Finalize a website and communications plan for tracking and implementing the action items.

- Ask Division of Student Life portfolio leads to identify which action items intersect within their portfolios and provide recommendations for meeting action item metrics.

- Identify and clarify current action item progress and communicate these updates via finalized website and communication plans.

- Review and identify immediate staffing needs to implement this plan. Consider what can be implemented by current staff and resources and develop a position AREI strategic advisor to lead and guide the action items, a position reporting into the Student Culture & Equity portfolio.

- Share the AREI strategic plan with students, campus partners and additional stakeholders.

- Identify annual priorities for the next five years and transparently communicate these priorities to the Division of Student Life and campus partners.

The action items outlined in this AREI strategic plan are critical to improving and leading the student experience at the University of Delaware. James Baldwin stated, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." This plan provides the Division of Student Life an opportunity to face and lead racial equity and inclusion change.

# REFERENCES

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José-Luis Riera Charge Meeting Presentation

Final Presentation at UD Student Life Conference

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