May 25, 2021

To all within our collective communities:

We, as the Higher Education Program faculty and staff at Texas Tech University, are unified in sharing our feelings of sadness and anger associated with the historical inequities consistently imposed on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), via both overt and inconspicuous manners. We are saddened, frustrated, and infuriated by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, Ahmaud Arbery, and Daniel Prude (among others) as they provide the most recent reminders of the violence and devaluing of lives evident throughout the history of the United States, affecting tens of thousands of lives and families. We emphatically state that Black Lives Matter, and our motivation is renewed to do all that we can to bring about societal change. This statement serves as our collective call to action to the communities with which we engage, including our program, department, college, university, and the field of higher education.

As scholars and practitioners of higher education, we believe in the positive impact that higher education can have on those who are able to access it, but we are also mindful that the legacy of White Supremacy within the United States leaves us to ponder the question posed by Langston Hughes, “what happens to a dream deferred?”¹ Consequently, achieving true equality and equity for all has yet to be realized due to structural inequities, racist policies, unjust practices, nonchalant dispositions towards social justice, and oppressive processes within academe. We call upon leaders at Texas Tech University and throughout higher education to revise or remove policies, practices, beliefs, and cultural norms that create barriers to students, faculty, and staff based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other marginalized and subjugated identities. We commit to participate in these efforts through our daily activities of research, teaching, and service, including involvement in faculty senate, committee service, community engagement, outreach, and advocacy.

In all of our interactions, we work to move ourselves and others beyond simply “not being racist” to a place of antiracism, which is defined as “one who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and none needs developing, and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity.”² This call to action is not a one-time endeavor, and it reflects our earnest efforts to transform our program for the betterment of all involved. With this in mind, the list of action items below reflects our intentional efforts to actualize antiracism.

**Focusing on our program, we commit to:**

- Evaluating our own positionalities as faculty, examining our privileges, and self-reflecting on the role that we each play in perpetuating systems of oppression.
- Make curriculum changes in our master’s and doctoral programs such that (a) literature supporting the development of antiracist practices is an integral part of students’ coursework, and (b) students are assessed on their understanding of how structural inequities impede educational attainment.
- Conduct semester town halls to understand the needs of our students and then act on the feedback received to create a more positive climate for BIPOC students, faculty, and staff.
- Seek feedback through an annual climate survey to understand the experiences of our students to determine specific needs, supports, and areas for improvement within our program.
- Require that each of our courses have learning outcomes that align with the college mission to “invest in a diverse student body” and, beyond that, actualize antiracism.
- Develop a program antiracism statement that is incorporated into all course syllabi, outlining our program’s commitment to antiracism and our corresponding expectations of students.
- Engage students in our antiracism research and work, and support the dissemination of their research at regional, state, and national conferences and outlets.
- Assess recruitment, application, and admission processes for the master’s and doctoral programs through an equity and antiracist lens. We will modify accordingly to address programmatic barriers to access for BIPOC.

Focusing on our college, we commit to:

- Compile a list of the research, teaching, and service work that we do to support antiracism, diversity, and equity, and disseminate this work within the college to promote antiracism.
- Contribute to and support the work of the College of Education Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and provide input and feedback on all college policies and initiatives.
- Be leaders in the College of Education in promoting an inclusive environment that supports equity for BIPOC students, faculty, and staff by (a) engaging in discourse on antiracism in our committee work, leadership appointments, and informal interactions with others, and (b) holding ourselves and others accountable when our actions do not align with our stated mission and values.
- Engage in purposeful conversation across the college with other disciplines on topics germane to social justice, antiracism, and White Supremacy in education.

Focusing on the university, we commit to:

- Hold the university accountable to investing in the tenets of the institutional mission statement, which include being “dedicated to student success by preparing learners to be ethical leaders for a diverse and globally competitive workforce” by calling out racism when it occurs and advocating for policies and processes that support BIPOC students, faculty, and staff.
- Conduct and/or participate in regular town halls focused on how the institution can create a more positive climate for BIPOC students, faculty, and staff.
- Support the work of the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion by providing program expertise and leadership to support their efforts toward antiracism.

Focusing on the field of higher education, we commit to:

- Engage in discourse and research associated with and illustrating the structural inequities that affect the field of higher education through our presentations and publications, as well as in our participation and leadership in professional and academic organizations.
- Provide recommendations for action connected to our research findings.
- Promote anti-deficit framing and language in our discourse and publications.
- Question whose voice is not being heard and advocate for minoritized populations when participating in professional and academic organization meetings, decision-making spaces, and/or planning events.

We are committed to being active antiracists who seek to eliminate racist policies, practices, and procedures from our communities by holding ourselves, our colleagues, and the system accountable for oppressive behaviors. We invite all to join in developing their own action-oriented, antiracist agenda.

In solidarity, the Higher Education Program faculty and staff:

Lucy Arellano    Hugo Garcia    Bryan K. Hotchkins    Grant Jackson
David Jones    Stephanie J. Jones    Dave Louis
Jon McNaughtan    Valerie Paton    Joni Sanders

---