

Working Group F: A Required Educational Program for Faculty

Draft Recommendations for Senate Consideration (12/16/2020)

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Background

[Working Group F](#) (WG-F) was charged with the design of a required educational program for faculty as part of a larger [antiracism initiative](#). While existing efforts associated with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have had a positive impact on climate, policy and faculty behavior, there is a great deal more that needs to be done. The WG-F recommendation seeks to enhance those educational programs by folding into them various accountability structures that will improve effectiveness. Consistent with President Pollack's call for a program that is "designed to ensure understanding of how inherited social and historical forces have shaped our society", WG-F also recommends that a version of the "literacy modules" associated with the student educational requirement be part of the requirement for faculty. The DEI and literacy "halves" complement each other; they each affect behavior and speak to how faculty interact with each other, with staff, and our increasingly diverse student population.

By "faculty" we mean all members of the University and RTE faculties. Job descriptions certainly vary across these populations but dedication to an antiracist campus should not. Versions of these recommendations must be developed for post-docs, GRAs, and TAs.

The Goal of the Program

The goal of the educational program for faculty is to create an antiracist and equitable climate on campus. We need to learn how to discuss and act on a range of difficult issues. To do this we must understand structural racism, and how systemic bias and privilege work. Accordingly, WG-F recommends adoption of the following goal statement:

Structural racism and systemic bias stand between what Cornell is and what it should be. A faculty that actively work to dismantle racial and cultural barriers, and by so doing, inspire the highest level of personal integrity and inclusive behavior are critical. The required educational programs aims to support faculty in this effort. The program takes the position that ensuring equity is an essential part of our job and defines a framework for interacting with other faculty, with students, with members of the staff and the broader community.

Ongoing DEI Efforts

A number of units sponsor DEI-related workshops that are available in various formats – from one hour virtual sessions to two-day institutes to week long courses in the summer to semester long “fellow” programs that meet monthly.

The *Office of Faculty Development and Diversity* ([OFDD](#)) focuses attention on issues of faculty recruitment and retention, compositional diversity and climate. It hosts multiple [workshops](#) and has partnered with the *Cornell Interactive Theatre Ensemble* ([CITE](#)) to produce sessions that address faculty recruiting (“It Depends on the Lens”), tenure and promotion, and race/gender issues in the classroom (“Hang in There and Be Tough”). It maintains an extensive list of [resources](#) that relate to race and antiracism that facilitate learning within the colleges and departments.

The *Center for Teaching Innovation* ([CTI](#)) offers a course entitled [Teaching & Learning in the Diverse Classroom](#) and a two-day [Faculty Institute on Community Engaged Learning](#), as well as a more schedule-friendly [online learning community](#) version of the latter.

The *Intergroup Dialog Project* ([IDP](#)) oversees a required DEI orientation program for undergraduate students, and also partners with the OFDD to produce sessions on advising and communicating across differences. The OFDD also collaborates with the *Graduate School’s Office of Inclusion and Student Engagement* that has developed a host of its own [programs and initiatives](#). Finally, the *Office of Human Resources* ([OHR](#)) recently instituted a required [six-course DEI training program](#) for staff. Versions of the modules on “Understanding Ourselves and Our Ability to Create Change” and “Speaking Up and Responding” may be especially relevant to faculty.

An essential feature of the proposed educational requirement is to maximize the effect that these programs have on the faculty.

A Note on “Educational Requirement” vs “Mandatory Training”

One way to “dial up” participation in a workshop program is to make it mandatory. For example, we have mandatory [Title IX training](#) for all employees, mandatory research ethics and [IRB training](#) for any researcher engaging human subjects or [RCR training](#) for the responsible conduct of research and [faculty search training](#) for departments looking to hire. We will suggest that the educational program be required of all faculty. However, we recognize that care must be exercised to ensure that elevated participation leads to elevated impact. Research indicates that the reluctant participant’s bias can be reinforced by a poorly designed workshop. “Mandatory Training for faculty” has overtones of being top-down and mechanistic. On the other hand, a well-executed, thought provoking educational requirement holds real promise. It suggests that we agree that there is something important for us to understand and act upon as we strive to create an institution that is equitable for all who work and study here, and that will prepare students for thriving in a diverse society.

It must be appreciated that the interpretation of participation or compliance statistics is not straight forward. For example, suppose 400 out of a cohort of 1600 faculty did not participate in a required inclusive classroom training. This does not necessarily mean that they are all problematic or that they haven’t taken part in some other form of related learning. Thus, we may very well be pleased with that level of compliance. On the other hand, suppose 40 of those 400 individuals who did not participate in the training exhibited negative behavior in front of 25 students/year. This would mean that one thousand students are annually subjected to unfortunate behavior, which by any reasonable metric is unacceptable given Cornell numbers.

Recommendations that are Program-Related

[The question of content is still under discussion. The focus of discussions in the Working Group have mostly been on issues of delivery, compliance, enhanced participation, and accountability. We have however discussed the following two content-related issues.]

1. *Expanding the Reach of Required DEI Programming.*

As noted earlier, the *Office of Human Resources (OHR)* recently instituted a required [six-course DEI training program](#) for staff. Versions of the modules on “Understanding Ourselves and Our Ability to Create Change” and “Speaking Up and Responding” may be especially relevant to faculty. Students too are required to undertake certain mandatory trainings prior to taking up certain tasks, including when they apply for funding for student organizations. Just as the OFDD-run workshop “It Depends on the Lens” strives to educate faculty search committee members on a range of DEI issues, WG-F recommends that there should be workshops designed to cover DEI issues as they relate to the work any faculty member does, and especially as related to various positions of authority faculty hold.

2. *Faculty-driven Content of Required Literacy Programming.*

A for-credit student educational requirement is being developed in parallel to the faculty educational requirement. The current plan is for the student requirement to have a part that will focus on understanding the structural and historical basis of race, ethnicity and indigeneity through a global perspective, but with a particular focus on the United States. The content will be prepared by our faculty colleagues whose scholarship and expertise is focused on these questions. Videos and other materials, including discussion frameworks to help facilitate post-viewing discussion could be reshaped for efficient use by faculty in other disciplines and fields.

Recommendations that Would Enhance Participation and Accountability

1. *On Enhancing Participation Via Accreditation.*

We hope that all faculty will see the need to participate, by choice, in the educational requirement, regardless of its final design, and regardless of their research expertise, scholarship, or personal positions. However, we also suggest putting policies in place to support full participation. This could be similar to the accreditation scheme that is now in place for faculty who serve on search committees, or engage with human subjects in their research. We could, for example, mandate completion of the requirement in order to hold any positions of authority in a department, college, and at the university. We would also like to note that this requirement is no different than what we are requiring from our students and staff colleagues, and link participation to our annual evaluations.

In thinking about ensuring participation by all faculty, it is important to keep in mind that chairs are overloaded and do not have the time to apply a comprehensive bully pulpit strategy. By ensuring participation in the ways we have outlined, the burden of enforcing compliance is not just on the chair.

2. *On the Role of the Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs and Diversity (VPAA) and the Office of Faculty Development and Diversity (OFDD).*

The VPAA and OFDD have the expertise and an outstanding track record of partnering with the CTI, the CITE, the IDP, the graduate school, the colleges, and the departments to develop effective professional development programs for faculty. **We recommend that the DEI components of the educational**

requirement for faculty continue to be offered and coordinated through the OFDD. However, that office is at its limit with a very small staff currently servicing over ninety units. It is understood that any part of the initiative that increases faculty involvement with OFDD programs will require additional resources. **We also recommend that the VPAA/OFDD regularly inform and receive feedback on their DEI efforts with faculty from the governance body of the proposed center.**

3. On Accountability.

Workshops and courses are not enough; there needs to be an attendant accountability structure. For example, as follow-up to a session on faculty recruiting there is communication between the unit and the Associate Dean of the College when the candidate short list is formed and when an offer is about to be made. We need to build in accountability structures as a way to encourage faculty participation in programs and to track program effectiveness. We make three recommendations

A. Include a DEI-related question in course evaluations.

This is currently the case in Engineering where the following question is included:

To what extent have the professors and teaching staff fostered an inclusive environment such that the class is welcoming to all, everyone is encouraged to participate, none are made to feel different, and all are treated fairly?

Course evaluations are a venue where individual instructors can be held accountable. They are generally designed by the colleges but there is a move to have a small set of university-wide questions show up in all evaluations. We understand that course evaluations are flawed, but these flaws are well known and steps should be taken so that the results are professionally interpreted and useful to the instructor.

B. All renewal and promotion dossiers must include a DEI statement by the candidate.

DEI-related statements are currently required from all faculty candidates at the time of application. Tenure and promotion guidelines allow candidates to include a statement on contribution to diversity. Details need to be developed by the Senate committee on [Academic Freedom and the Professional Status of the Faculty](#) (AFPS).

C. Require DEI climate statements to be part of a department chair's annual report to Dean

These reports should include a specific section on how racist and biased behavior and issues of climate in the department have been addressed. The annual reports should be part of the department's "dossier" whenever it is reviewed (approximately every seven years). Details need to be developed by the [Faculty Committee on Program Review](#) and the VPAA. Currently, Deans are asked to include a section on DEI efforts associated with their Colleges in their annual report to the Provost.