

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHARLOTTE
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ANNUAL REPORT
2021

Submitted By:

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CLAS Race and Social Justice Advocate

January 28, 2022

MISSION

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences is committed to eliminating systemic racism wherever it exists in its practices and policies. This is not a new commitment, but one we want to re-new, reinvigorate and prioritize. We are committed to ensuring that our strategic plans and actions will be derived from our commitment to eliminate racist practices from our administrative, instructional and research worlds, with the goal of contributing to the creation of an equitable, just, and sustainable future. The college office is committed to providing staff support, resources and advocacy for this work.

ADVOCATE

Dr. Kendra Jason is the [inaugural Race and Social Justice Advocate](#) for UNC Charlotte's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. She is also an associate professor of Sociology. Her specializations include race, class and gender inequality, and work and occupations. Dr. Jason has nearly 15 years of diversity, equity, and inclusion experience. She is a Sociology Master (2006) and Ph.D. (2015) graduate of North Carolina State University. In addition to completing the North Carolina State University Equal Opportunity Institute Certificate Program (2009), she has developed, facilitated, and engaged in numerous race-equity and social justice programs. Dr. Jason met with several CLAS departments during faculty meetings to guide their RSJ efforts, and she met one-on-one with faculty and department chairs for more inter-personal matters related to the work. Dr. Jason also helps facilitate the activities of the CLAS RSJ Working Groups.

WORKING GROUPS

- ❖ The **Anti-racist Workplace Working Group**, led by **T.K. Khan**, works to ensure that the college work environment is supportive for faculty of all ranks, staff, and students.
- ❖ The **Graduate Recruitment and Success Working Group**, led by **Pinku Mukherjee**, works to improve graduate recruitment and success of Black graduate students.
- ❖ The **Policy Audit Working Group**, led by **Richard Leeman**, works to find ways to make the kinds of changes in our college that reflect our commitment to dismantling systems of oppression, racism, and structural violence by working at multiple levels simultaneously.
- ❖ The **Racial and Social Justice Faculty Research and Outreach Working Group**, led by **Jason Black**, works to encourage, recognize, reward, and support service, research, grant work, creative projects, and public projects dedicated to racial and social justice.
- ❖ The **Self-Reflection Working Group**, led by **Maisha Cooper**, works to engage in college and department self-reflection and self-reflexivity.
- ❖ The **Undergraduate Student Success Working Group** led by **Debarati Dutta** works to improve graduate recruitment and success of Black undergraduate students.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS

- January: Over [90 CLAS members](#) responded to the call and began working in RSJ Working Groups
- March: RSJ Advocate able to identify what is going well, what are concerns, and what is preventing [RSJ efforts in CLAS](#)
- March: CLAS Race and Social Justice [website and resource repository](#) launched
- April: Established and broadened intercollegiate [DEI networking](#); Dr. Jason introduced to DEI committees on campus
- September: [Department Diversity Liaisons](#) (DDL) received formal [onboarding and role development training](#)
- November: [4-part equity series](#), "*Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI): A Reckoning Force in Higher Education*" funded by the Chancellors' Diversity Challenge Fund, and facilitated by Dr. Stephanie Helms Pickett completed

- November: Book proposal, “*Race and Social Justice: Building an Inclusive Experience through Awareness, Advocacy, and Action*” was approved for publishing through Atkins Library

WORKING GROUP: ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GOAL PROJECTIONS

Under the direction of the working group leaders, all six working groups have made great strides towards race and social justice in the College. Every working group met with their whole group at least once a month, with some eventually forming sub-committees to manage hefty tasks. The working group leaders met with Dr. Jason individually, at the beginning of each semester, and then three times as a group. In these meetings, they shared experiences, challenges, strategies and goal-set.

Working Group/# of members	Accomplishment(s) in 2021	2022 Goal(s)
Anti-racist Workplace (20)	Identified five areas of concentration: 1. Belonging and Policy vs. Practice 2. Data Driven Approach & Tracking 3. Listening 4. Racism and Faculty Promotion, Mentoring, and Networking 5. Disparities	Develop a detailed report with recommendations for each area
Graduate Recruitment and Success (14)	Reconsidered the metric we use to define success; re- envision “success” Planned training for graduate selection committees (similar to new hire)	Increase numbers of underrepresented and BIPOC in our graduate programs & develop a training/workshop designed for graduate faculty and mentors
Policy Audit (10)	Made changes to RPT workplace policy concrete	Secure approval for the Workload revision & finish and secure approval for RPT document revision.
Racial and Social Justice Faculty Research and Outreach (12)	Developed short and long-term goals for each area of concentration: 1. Encourage 2. Recognize 3. Reward 4. Support	Review and revise areas based on comparison data
Self-Reflection (9)	Designed Self-Reflection Symposium with tracks for faculty, staff, and students	Fund all-day virtual Self-Reflexivity Symposium
Undergraduate Student Success (25)	Identified 6 action areas: 1. Petition for smaller class sizes 2. Peer-to-peer mentoring for BIPOC students 3. Faculty awareness/information accessibility 4. Faculty development/mentoring institute 5. DEI- and race & social justice-informed audit of on-campus student support resources 6. DEI-informed course syllabi	Workshop each of the six areas and prepare recommendations

BOOK PROJECT

Dr. Kendra Jason wrote a proposal for an E-Book, titled, *Race and Social Justice: Building an Inclusive Experience through Awareness, Advocacy and Action* as a collaborative writing project to capture our CLAS RSJ efforts. The book was approved for publishing through Atkins Library. Funding was applied for through the Thomas Ross Foundation. Notification of funding is expected in March 2022. Below are the scope, focus, and description of the book:

- This book is designed for all members of the university as an exemplar of race and social justice work.
- Scope: The purpose of this book is to help university members navigate and eliminate individual, interpersonal, and institutional discrimination and to create a more inclusive workplace and learning environment for faculty, staff, and students.
- Focus: Through the narratives of college members charged with dismantling anti-Black racism and breaking down barriers for full participation by all organizational members, we learn from their concerns, challenges, successes, and change process what works and does not when building diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice into the fabric of a large college.
- Content: The book will center the work of the six working groups. Each chapter will detail research in their substantive (e.g., anti-racist workplace, undergraduate student success), statistics and content specific to CLAS, recommendations/action steps and suggested long-term plan. The tentative Table of Contents is below:

Chapter 1: Introduction: Why we committed to Anti- Black Racism
 Chapter 2: The Approach and The Resistance
 Chapter 3: Why Self-Reflection Comes First
 Chapter 4: Building an Anti-racist Workplace
 Chapter 5: The Centrality of Policy Audits
 Chapter 6: Racial and Social Justice Faculty Research and Outreach
 Chapter 7: Graduate Recruitment and Success
 Chapter 8: Undergraduate Student Success
 Chapter 9: Conclusion: Race and Social Justice is the Beginning. What is the end?

CHANCELLOR'S DIVERISTY CHALLENGE FUND AWARD

In Spring 2021, Dr. Jason was awarded the Chancellors' Diversity Challenge Fund, titled, "*Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI): A Reckoning Force in Higher Education.*" In this virtual learning series, Dr. Stephanie Helms Pickett, Associate Vice Provost Inclusive Excellence and Strategic Practice, Office for Institutional Equity and Diversity at North Carolina State University, used her expertise to address Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) at UNCC. Dr. Helms Pickett: 1) facilitated an innovative anti-racist teaching strategy workshop with faculty, 2) served as a JEDI consultant with the CLAS administrative and faculty council, 3) conducted an interactive workshop on the impact of culture and identity on the sense of belongingness in higher education, and 4) led an engagement workshop with undergraduate students to help them gain a mindset centered in justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Over 243 CLAS members registered for the events with 30-70 members attending each session. Here are the evaluation results for the sessions:

The Influence of Identity and Culture on Belongingness in Higher Education/September 14, 2021

- 77% of participants described the session as informative
- 74% of participates reported they are more supportive of diversity efforts as a result of this training
- 100% participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *I feel I have a better understanding of the significance of feelings of belonging and inclusion within higher education.*

Leading through Accountability and Advocacy with the CLAS Administrative Council/October 21, 2021

- 88% of participants described the session as informative
- 56% of participates reported they are more supportive of diversity efforts as a result of this training
- 88% participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *I feel I am better equipped to advance goals in a meaningful way, while considering how my mindset guides my decisions towards an inclusive learning environment.*

Mastering a JEDI Mindset/October 27, 2021

- 87% of participants described the session as informative
- 80% of participants reported they are more supportive of diversity efforts as a result of this training
- 100% participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *I have a better understanding of the importance of being a critical thinker and practitioner that operates in a mindset centered in justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.*

The Importance of Culturally Responsive and Anti-Racist Strategies in the Classroom /November 15, 2021

- 73% of participants described the session as informative
- 68% of participants reported they are more supportive of diversity efforts as a result of this training
- 91% participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *I feel I am better equipped to create an inclusive and anti-racist learning environment where students can better experience connectedness and belonging.*

RSJ ADVOCATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Kendra Jason participated in several professional development workshops, training, and conferences to support her work as the CLAS Race and Social Justice Advocate including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (AAAS STEM) Equity Achievement (SEA) Change 4-part series on Institutional Strategies for Change, the National Public Health Week Racial Equity workshop, the American Sociological Association Diverse Approaches to Race and Racism in Organizations, Occupations, and Work conference, the Graduate Student Success and Wellness Conference, and the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education annual conference. She also participated in a 16-hour/2-day race equity training through the Racial Equity Institute (REI). Dr. Jason earned the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace Certificate from the University of South Florida's 14-hour/7-week certificate program.

DDL CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE END OF 2021 & STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THEM

With the support of Dr. Richard Leeman, Dr. Jason has worked very closely with the DDLs to gauge the racial climate of the departments and overall College, communicate RSJ efforts, and to understand what factors are helping and hindering RSJ efforts. By the end of 2021, these were the main concerns expressed by the DDLs and the strategies that Dr. Jason suggested to navigate them.

ISSUE/CHALLENGE/CONCERN	SUGGESTED STRATEGY
RSJ issues are acknowledged, but not addressed	Keep the issues on the table through departmental communication and faculty meetings Find other RSJ outlets where you can build a more supportive network and share ideas and strategies
Need more faculty lines and more faculty of color	Demonstrate need for race and social justice areas of need (curriculum, research, expertise) and create culture of belonging
Faculty cannot meet in person which is detrimental to effort	Very good work is being done in virtual spaces Make sure virtual meetings are effective with clear agenda and objectives

Resistance to RSJ is more visible	This was expected. Keep moving forward. If you feel intimidated or threatened contact your chair, the Race and Social Justice Advocate, or other university personnel for support
Competing priorities make RSJ efforts difficult to accomplish	Find balance in the workload. Ask/negotiate reduction or exchange of responsibilities Find ways to build RSJ into the work, not separate from it
Desire more visibility and accessibility to RSJ efforts	Communication about RSJ is shared with DDLs, CLAS chairs, CLAS email blast, including in resources, and Faculty Council
Desire acknowledgement of DDL efforts	Document efforts and share them with your departments on a regular basis Incorporate department members in work. Don't just report, build accountability through shared responsibility RSJ will emphasize this concern with CLAS Admin Council, Chairs, and Faculty Council
Lack of collective effort, goals, or vision in department	Keep communicating. Sharing ideas is the best way build a network of support around RSJ

EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS

As a result of the work completed in 2021, the DDLs reported the following activities towards RSJ.

For Undergraduate Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created Mixon-Ramsey Black Lives Matter undergraduate scholarship to support underrepresented minority (URM) students and to help foster/increase URM majors and minors • Involved students in our DEI efforts • Increased the number of clubs/organizations focused on providing support to black and brown students in our major • Had face to face meeting with our students of color to gain their perspective and we could do to better address student concerns • Used virtual spaces for better accessibility in recruitment of students • Inaugurated a peer mentoring program among our students to assist us in meeting the unique needs of students of color
For Graduate Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded the Chancellor Diversity Grant to create and fund a pilot program to increase URM representation in our Graduate program • Involved students in our DEI efforts • Targeted recruitment of historically marginalized graduate students • Used virtual spaces for better accessibility in recruitment of students • Inaugurated a peer mentoring program among our students to assist us in meeting the unique needs of students of color

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied for funding through Graduate Education to fund recruitment fair, access to HBCUs, and college application waivers
Faculty/Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired new faculty that are of women of color • Advertised New Hire position to have research, teaching, and service associated with justice issues • Targeted recruitment of historically marginalized groups in proposal writing • Created bi-monthly brown bag to discuss equity and inclusivity
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement to change policy to be more inclusive of DEI efforts • Created Ad-Hoc DEI committee and/or formalized/formalizing DEI committee • Establishment of DEI director on department level • Updated curriculum with more equity and justice courses with specific and equity-based course titles • Included diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of it goals for strategic planning or goals • Created Climate Survey (targeting faculty, undergraduate and graduate students) to assess and analyze areas of need • Designed job advertisements to require demonstration and evidence of equity/justice effectiveness by potential new faculty • Asked for college tours with Board of Governors/state/federal personnel include ethnic-based departments, programs, and scholarship
Culture Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved students in our DEI efforts • Engaged in more deliberate DEI conversations/increased awareness • Created free expression board to give all students a voice • Created a large map with push pins so students could mark their country of origin and to showcase the diversity within our department • Added words of affirmation to empty wall space within the department • Added pictures and biographies of scientists from diverse racial/ethnic groups to department common areas • Updated curriculum with more equity and justice courses with specific and equity-based course titles • Used virtual spaces for better accessibility in recruitment of students • Participated in 2-day racial equity workshop for entire department • Created bi-monthly brown bag to discuss equity and inclusivity

Created: January 13, 2022; one year after establishment of CLAS Race and Social Justice Effort

Source: CLAS Diversity Department Liaisons (DDL)

[END OF REPORT]