

Academic Leadership Team Action Plans AY2020-21

In an interview published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Elizabeth Alexander, poet and Director of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, referenced this line from Gwendolyn Brooks' "The Second Sermon on the Warpland": "Conduct your blooming in the noise and whip of the whirlwind."

Our goal, as academic leaders at the University of Puget Sound, is to provide the space and the support for students to bloom, even in the midst of a whirlwind. Yet words can seem empty without deeds, rhetoric can be hollow if it's not translated into action.

National and local events have exposed, once again, deep injustices and practices of racism, prejudice, and discrimination that require continual affirmation of our shared humanity. As we watch what unfolds across the country and in Tacoma, my, and the Academic Leadership Team's, thoughts have turned to our own campus, and the work that is needed here to more effectively support and be responsive to students and colleagues, and advance Puget Sound's goals of an inclusive and antiracist campus and community. To advance this work, and to signify our responsibility and commitments, the Academic Leadership Team puts forth key elements in its plan for action, to implement this year and beyond, to advance a just world so that our students can bloom.

Here are some actions being taken by the Academic Leadership Team:

- Across all areas in **Academic Affairs**, update all materials and documents to ensure that language use in them is inclusive.
- The **Provost's Office** will direct new course development funds for faculty be awarded for courses that are significantly redesigned or created anew to improve or enhance pedagogies or course content that is built on inclusive and equitable pedagogical practices, or critically or creatively advances antiracist content.
- Building on the efforts established to support the KNOW initiative, **Collins Library** is committing targeted funding to purchase resources that support Black Lives Matter.
- In addition, **Collins Library** will create a series of lesson plans/reflective prompts/discussion questions associated with our artists' books and zines that encourage conversations about race, bias, and equality and share widely with the campus community through online programming, web-based learning and a possible series of organized discussions
- The **Center for Writing, Learning and Teaching**, (CWLT) will work with Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (FEPPS) to provide training and support for peer tutors at Washington Corrections Center for Women.
- The **CWLT** also will offer a political letter writing workshop to student groups and clubs involved in advocacy work so that they can most effectively express their critical and thoughtful voices.
- In addition, the **CWLT** will continue to mentor and support peer tutors, many of whom have conversations about race, power, and privilege in the context of their tutoring appointments. Help equip our tutors to respond productively to students who are struggling to build a racial awareness and vocabulary, but while affirming the lives and experiences of minoritized students.
- The **Office of International Programs** will adjust mission statement of the Office of International Programs to reflect social justice in travel and cultivating global citizens, which in practice will result in more effectively assisting all students in seeing the opportunities to study abroad, conduct classroom visits to first year seminars, provide

enhanced communication and application support for students regarding the Benjamin F. Gilman Scholarship, initiative a series of information sessions for students from groups historically underrepresented in study abroad and in partnership with identity-based student clubs to hold specific info sessions and examine internal funding or new funding opportunities to assist students in studying abroad.

- In addition to assessing and expand the program portfolio to offer programs in locations or with themes meeting student interests, particularly those programs that focus on decolonization, social justice, and human rights, the **Office of International Programs** will add varied programs to meet the needs of students such as winter break programs and other short-term programs so that all students who want to study abroad have different types of opportunities from which to choose.
- **Student Academic Accommodations** will, as a staff, engage in a reading series on white fragility, so as to better understand white reactions to conversation about racism.
- **Student Affairs**, in partnership with Academic Affairs, will initiate a sustained dialogue series for the divisions and for the campus.
- The **Office of Institutional Research** commits to making data about student experiences more transparent to the campus, and to partner with other offices to review and assess data through an equity lens.
- The **Department of Athletics** is launching a Student-Athletes of Color student association in Fall 2020. Additionally, Athletics will better define the values of the Athletics Department and have those value permeate practices, as evidenced by its continuing series for African-American students to meet with former student-athlete alumni.
- Directed by the leadership of the **Associate Deans Office**, the *Sound Writing Handbook* will continue to be updated with resources and perspectives on inclusive language usage and respect for linguistic diversity. In the Bookends New Student Orientation program, student readings will continue to be updated to foreground issues of structural racism, and Bookends faculty orientation will engage faculty in capacity building exercises on inclusive pedagogy and strategies for promoting courageous conversation about race and racism in their Bookends and other classes.
- The **Office of Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement** commits to developing broader partnerships in Tacoma so as to expand resources and even more representation of community members from black, indigenous, people of color, and other marginalized communities. Specific efforts include developing launching a Community Advisory Board, supporting partnerships and projects serving the local community through the Civic Scholarship Hub, and elevating community voices through the new Sound Action Podcast.
- With a deep commitment to equipping students of all backgrounds to articulate their narratives, process their experiences, and access professional opportunities, the curricula of **Experiential Learning** programs have been revisited and updated to emphasize antiracist and inclusive practices. Opportunities in RISE, SFI, and our newly launched PEARLS club aim to create space for marginalized voices and equip students to pursue and have access to meaningful pre-professional experiences
- **Academic Advising** will re-develop academic advising materials and approaches for faculty advisors from the perspective of universal design
- **The Registrar's Office** will review all academic policies to ensure they are applied fairly and equitably to all students, including a multi-year review of each policy to determine if certain student identities are more likely to accrue to certain policies disproportionately and if so, advocate for updating the policies.