JMU Learning Centers

Annual Report on the Learning Centers' Antiracism Efforts

Academic Year 2020-2021

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I. Introduction

In the summer of 2020, spurred by a national racial reckoning and inspired by the efforts of many in higher education to name and actively respond to institutional racism, a group of Learning Centers (LC) faculty and one peer educator began drafting a departmental commitment to antiracism. Prior to drafting that commitment, the group researched the forms that racism takes in learning environments, read about the potential pitfalls of issuing a statement, and reviewed other antiracism statements from departments engaged in similar work both inside and outside of JMU. It was particularly important to the group to compose an action-oriented commitment that would push the department toward transformational change, rather than to merely issue a performative statement. After a departmental discussion and revision process at the beginning of the fall semester, the LC voted to adopt the Commitment to Antiracism in September 2020 (Appendix A).

With the support of Vice Provost Rudy Molina, Learning Centers' Executive Director Laura Schubert suspended all committee work for the year in order to give the department the opportunity to begin strategically enacting the ten pledges it made in the Commitment to Antiracism. A five-member justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) team with faculty representatives from across the department formed to lead the department in this area, and the department as a whole committed to meeting regularly to advance this work.

One of the first steps the JEDI team took was to compose an action-steps document to guide the department as a whole, as well as program areas and individuals, in making strategic and incremental progress (Appendix B). After reviewing these items, LC faculty and staff decided to prioritize these four areas: recruitment and hiring practices, data collection on racial climate in the LC, educational opportunities for all LC employees, and support of BIPOC LC employees. During the fall semester, the department met every three weeks to discuss and make progress on our antiracism efforts—and a preliminary review of our recruitment and hiring practices happened during this time. During the spring semester, everyone in the department joined at least one of two working groups: One group focused on developing racial climate surveys for the department and the other began planning and developing an antiracism module that would be required of all LC student employees as part of the onboarding process. The following sections detail how these efforts (and others) unfolded over the course of academic year 2020-2021, some preliminary results of our racial climate surveys, and a reflection on what we learned and where we hope to go next.

II. Reflection: How we are fulfilling the pledges in our Commitment to Antiracism?

In its Commitment to Antiracism, the LC put forward ten action-oriented pledges. This section will review our efforts and progress (or lack thereof) in each area.

1. Provide our peer educators, student and professional staff, and faculty with ongoing anti-racist training and professional development.

Recognizing that developing knowledge is core to enacting antiracist change, the Learning Centers established ongoing professional development in antiracist practices as a goal for the 2020-21 academic year. At the departmental level, a resource list, which includes material both available through JMU and through outside sources, was collectively constructed by the JEDI team to support faculty and staff. Moreover, a working group began drafting an antiracist training module to be integrated into our onboarding Canvas module for peer educators and office assistants. However, this effort is currently on hold, as the faculty designing it have requested that they receive more training moving forward. Additionally, Lucy Malenke has applied to be part of UC Berkeley's "Bridging Differences Community of Practice" cohort in AY 2021-2022 in order to get broader feedback on this training module moving forward.

Each of the five programs within the Learning Centers pursued antiracist training and professional development for peer educators and faculty members, which is detailed below:

- The Communication Center devoted three hours of their staff meetings to discussion and training on antiracism, offered antiracist resources to its members, and pursued antiracist professional development opportunities for its faculty and peer educators.
- English Language Learner Services (ELLS) devoted 10 hours of team meetings to antiracism workplace training and 10 hours of reviewing literature on the dynamics of racism in student support services in higher education. Additionally, ELLS sponsored its peer educators' and faculty member's completion of an antiracist training with the Diversity and Resiliency Institute of El Paso (DRIEP) in the fall of 2020.
- The Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) program developed and provided seven antiracist professional development meetings for peer educators that spanned roughly eight hours in total and developed a cross-disciplinary list of antiracist resources for peer educators to use and discuss in professional development meetings. Additionally, the PASS Leadership Team, which consists of faculty, a graduate assistant, and seasoned undergraduate students, participated in an antiracist book club across the summer and fall and an antiracist movie night and discussion. Some members also attended a professional development on abolitionist pedagogy. Lastly, antiracist events and resources for the JMU community, such as the diversity conference and events with JMU's chapter of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE), were routinely shared with peer educators.

- The Science and Math Learning Center (SMLC) led a required training for its peer educators that focused on antiracism and related topics and sponsored 10 peer educators' and three faculty coordinators' completion of the seven-hour DRIEP antiracist training. Faculty coordinators who attended the DRIEP training provided two supplemental "Lunch and Learn" events for its peer educators who attended the training. Additionally, one faculty member (Beth Cochran) served on the Mathematics & Statistics Department's diversity committee and as the department's DEI Activator, participated in the "We Want to Do More than Survive" reading and dialogue with CFI, and attended the VCU Becoming an Antiracist Educator series.
- The University Writing Center (UWC) created and required an anti-racism module containing three readings for its peer educators to complete and discuss within professional development groups. Additionally, two learning objectives related to anti-racism were added to the training course for peer educators.

This academic year, we made progress on creating training modules for peer educators within programs, but a future need is more training for faculty and administrative staff, especially from outside expert consultants, to develop a deeper shared knowledge of antiracism constructs, language, and best practices.

2. **Ensure that peer educators, staff, and faculty receive feedback and recognition for their efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., these topics should be addressed in client satisfaction surveys, Faculty Annual Reports, and in peer educator evaluations of faculty).**

The LC made limited progress on this pledge this year. For faculty, the FAAP is an established place to articulate personal professional goals for the year. As the Personnel Advisory Committee (PAC) is on hiatus this year, and PAC changes to the Policies and Procedures for Annual Performance Evaluation take effect the following year, faculty including DEI work in their FAAP/FAR has been left to faculty/Executive Director discretion for AY 2020-2021. In AY 2021-2022, the PAC agenda includes (1) asking faculty to articulate antiracism goals (personal and/or professional) as part of the FAAP and (2) adding descriptions of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion work in examples of satisfactory/excellent teaching, service, and administration in the Policies and Procedures for Annual Performance Evaluation. Further, the department will discuss and decide whether individual faculty or programs should be required to report on JEDI work in faculty or program annual reports.

The department did make progress on this pledge by developing question(s) for programs to use on their client satisfaction surveys that gauge clients' feelings of belonging during LC consultations or programming. For example, UWC asked clients 2 questions: (1) Did you feel welcomed and accepted by your consultant, and (2) The University Writing Center has a

commitment to diversity and inclusion, what feedback do you have on how we are doing or how we could best meet this commitment? A working group within the department developed an IRB-approved survey that has been distributed to clients across all areas of the LC.

3. **Review and revise our recruiting and hiring practices, including the ways that meritocracy and affinity bias limit the diversity of our faculty, staff, and peer educators.**

The department began addressing this pledge in the fall by dedicating time in faculty meetings to compiling and sharing a list of each program's current hiring and recruitment strategies. It then developed a set of questions related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion to be used during the application or interview process for applicants. Each program contributed to these department-level conversations, and programs had internal conversations as well related to the retention and hiring of BIPOC employees within their program areas. In addition to these conversations, in AY 2020-2021, the department hired one and re-hired another BIPOC faculty/staff member, whose perspectives, voices, and expertise have proved vital to the department.

In the spring, PASS, the SMLC, and the UWC added one or more questions related to the application of antiracism in their learning context to their existing interview structure and asked that question to their applicants:

- PASS: In what ways do you think issues surrounding the inclusion of social identity (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, etc.) are relevant to this role within the PASS Program?
- SMLC: One of the Learning Centers' values is "inclusive." Can you describe what this means to you and how it might affect your work as an employee here?
- UWC: This past year, the Learning Centers adopted a commitment to antiracism. Can you talk about one way that racism might affect the work you do as a UWC consultant? How might you respond in such a situation?

Having such a question as part of the interview process communicates to the applicants the inclusive values of the department and can allow hiring committees to better identify candidates who align with these values.

Additionally, some programs expanded their recruitment pathways by conducting two graduate assistant searches (UWC) and a search for peer educators (ELLS) via JMU JobLink; this had been identified as a successful strategy for attracting a more diverse applicant pool in our departmental conversations. More work will need to be done to standardize practices and cement them within each program's routine hiring process as well as to accomplish more of the action steps, such as having programs consult the Office of Equal Opportunity for position descriptions.

4. **Revisit departmental decision-making processes to ensure that BIPOC voices and perspectives are heard, considered, and valued.**

   As a department, we recognize that in order to fulfill this commitment (and others), we need to have an evidence-based understanding of the experiences that BIPOC clients, student employees, administrative staff, and faculty have within the Learning Centers. One of our major projects this year was developing a series of racial climate surveys to help us understand where we are and where we can improve (in addition to setting a baseline for future assessment of our efforts). In the spring semester, the Racial Climate Survey Working Group adapted and integrated several validated instruments for assessing racial climate into surveys that we tailored for specific audiences. We distributed these customized IRB-approved surveys to current LC student employees, former LC student employees, and LC clients near the end of the spring semester. Some administrative hurdles prevented us from distributing them earlier, and response rates were not what we hoped they would be. The most robust and informative results came from the survey of student employees. Those results are detailed below in Section 3. We have plans to re-administer the client survey (and perhaps others) again next year at a more opportune time, and we may re-administer all of them in the future as a means of assessing our progress.

   A couple of LC programs also worked toward ensuring that BIPOC voices and perspectives are heard, considered, and valued in their programs:

   - ELLS entered a self-study process that evaluated how to attract BIPOC employees in hiring processes, how to train employees in antiracism, and how to maintain a climate that professionally nurtures BIPOC student employees.
   - PASS, in addition to making discussion of antiracism and BIPOC experiences an integral part of weekly leadership meetings, incorporated racial climate questions in a mid-semester survey of session attendees to gauge their perceptions of leaders and the program as a whole. The leadership team within the PASS program reviewed and discussed these results collectively.

   Moving forward, the departmental leadership team (which includes the executive director and all program coordinators) still needs to develop formal processes and mechanisms for identifying who lacks representation and how to incorporate those voices and perspectives into decision-making processes.

5. **Review and revise the language of our department's "inclusive" value, with a focus on making it actionable and justice-oriented.**

   The department has not yet begun work on revising the "inclusive" value; however, this will be a priority for the coming academic year.

6. **Use our spaces to promote the accomplishments of BIPOC students, scholars, innovators, experts, authors, and creators.**

   Due to the lack of in-person services and limited presence in the LC physical spaces during the current academic year, many of these efforts have been deferred until the upcoming academic year across all areas. One notable exception is highlighting the accomplishment of LC Office Assistant Jay-Anne Johnson, the first Black woman to graduate with a bachelors degree in biophysical chemistry in Virginia. This significant accomplishment was posted as an announcement on the LC Canvas page which is distributed to all faculty, staff, and student employees within the LC Department.

7. **Ensure that our BIPOC peer educators, staff, and faculty have clear-cut avenues for support and processing, potentially in the form of a closed discussion group.**

   The department did not advance this goal much this academic year and will need to clearly communicate and, in some cases, create policies to meet this need in the near future. Importantly, the department will need to work with the Office of Equal Opportunity when refining these policies and procedures to ensure best practices and legal compliance as some instances of discrimination must be reported to and investigated by the OEO.

   One step in this process that was achieved this academic year was the creation of a department-wide meeting group for BIPOC faculty, staff, and employees of the LC, which has been temporarily named PECOC (Peer Educators of Color Online Caucus) due to the online-only meetings during JMU's period of remote instruction. The group was created and facilitated by Rudy Barrett from the UWC and Darius Green from PASS as a response to calls from racial equity researchers and best practitioners to create, value, and protect BIPOC-only spaces. The group is designed to serve two main functions: foster community/social connections, and support BIPOC faculty/staff in their work at the LC, including having the ability to have the caucus consult on decisions made by LC leadership.

   This year, the caucus held three meetings (one in the fall semester and two in the spring) with the maximum attendance at any of these events being two (not including the facilitators), with the first two meetings only having one attendee. Despite the low attendance, each meeting did have community building through informal conversation and an online gaming activity. However, at this point, the group is very much in its infancy and will need support in order to grow and meet its intended goals. In the future, PECOC will need to finalize and clarify the mission, vision, values, identity and branding for the organization, and find ways to increase engagement.

8. **When appropriate, share anti-racist reflections, pedagogies, and practices beyond the Learning Centers via resources, conferences, symposia, and workshops.**

   There have been several actions taken in support of this goal. Many of the LC areas collaborated on a presentation at the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) conference. The presentation, entitled "Building A Commitment to Anti-Racism: A Model for Enacting Lasting Change," shared many of the same efforts detailed in this document. ELLS Coordinator Kristen Shrewsbury was invited by JMU Athletics Diversity Council to give a talk about white privilege in "doing the work." PASS faculty Darius Green and Matt Trybus delivered a scholarly talk through the Center for Faculty Innovation on cross-racial mentoring. SMLC faculty Beth Cochran shared the LC antiracism action items with the Mathematics & Statistics Department as they began working on their own diversity and inclusion statement and goals.

   In addition to the efforts made within the LC program areas, there were significant contributions to this goal by individuals in the department. Lucy Malenke collaborated with Social Work faculty Shanza Isom to offer a session entitled "Adding Mindfulness to Your Racial Justice Toolkit: Practices for Healing, Awareness, and Compassionate Connection" at the JMU Diversity Conference (March 2021). Claire Ravenburg (PASS) and Jay-Anne Johnson (office assistant), served as founding members of JMU's student chapter of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE) which facilitated several events/meetings that incorporated antiracist discussions and ideas from PASS.

9. **Seek out collaboration and feedback on this work from outside sources, such as the Office of Access and Inclusion and Center for Faculty Innovation.**

   Throughout the year, the JEDI team informally reviewed the University efforts being published around anti-racism so as to stay abreast of community work (for example the Campus History Committee). For AY21-22, a more strategic approach will allow for a comprehensive view of the movement at the university to inform our departmental efforts.

   University legal services and the IRB both provided invited feedback on the antiracism commitment statement and the conceptual plan for LC new hire antiracism training.

   Existing partnerships, such as Lucy Malenke's affiliation with CHBS, are natural places to share our efforts as opportunities arise. Intentional connections are happening as faculty collaborate on antiracism initiatives, such as with the CommCenter and ELLS partnering with The African, African American, and Diaspora (AAAD) Studies Center and Center For Innovation this spring to prepare for a linguistic bias series in AY21-22.

Individual areas are also seeking out feedback, such as ELLS seeking and receiving feedback from the Virginia Latino Higher Education Network about the racial and linguistic biases inherent in the name *ELLS.*

10. Reflect on and annually assess our anti-racism efforts, allowing them to evolve as we make progress.

At the end of the spring semester, the LC department faculty met to review and discuss revisions to the Commitment to Antiracism that they adopted in the fall of 2020. The department also engaged in reflection over antiracist efforts across the academic year that identified progress made, supportive factors towards antiracist change, improvements to be made, hopes for the upcoming academic year, and needs related to sustaining antiracist work in the department and within programs. Additionally, the JEDI team has crafted the current document to assess the degree to which efforts and progress made towards the department's antiracist commitment and to determine future direction for antiracist work in the department.

Each program within the LC also engaged in annual reflection of their antiracist initiatives for the academic year and consolidated their efforts into a single document. In addition to this effort, the following have been completed or are ongoing:

- The Communication Center integrated antiracist commitments into its annual reporting and evaluations.
- ELLS has continued to engage in planning for the upcoming academic year.
- PASS has and will continue to analyze survey data collected on antiracism and has integrated antiracist discussion and reflections into weekly Leadership Team meetings and following professional development meetings for its peer educators.
- UWC has begun the collaborative process of writing its own commitment to antiracist pedagogy.

III. Summary of racial climate survey data

The racial climate survey for LC student employees was completed by 25 peer educators, graduate assistants, and/or office assistants—about a quarter of our current student staff. Six of those respondents identified as non-White (3 Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American; 1 Latinx or Hispanic American; 1 East Asian or Asian American; and 1 Other).

The survey yielded many encouraging results. First and foremost, student employees of all races expressed that they feel a strong sense of belonging in their program areas (with only one student—who identified as white—saying they belonged just "a little bit"). They also responded enthusiastically about the antiracism training they have received in the LC. The vast majority completely or mostly agreed that their training has:

- increased their understanding of discrimination, (78%)
- given them opportunities to openly discuss diversity issues, (87%)
- encouraged them to be aware of how political and social issues affect their work for the LC, (83%)
- taught them how to support clients of different races and cultures, (96%)
- given them opportunities to learn about the ways racism manifests in learning environments, (96%)
- and helped them learn about the harm of stereotyping. (96%)

Student employees' perceptions of the racial climate in the LC was generally positive. The vast majority reported that faculty and administrative staff in the LC treat students of all races equitably (88% completely or mostly) and that student employees are welcoming to people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (96% completely or mostly). All respondents said they would recommend the LC to students from racial and ethnic minority groups as a supportive environment to receive assistance. However when asked how big of a problem racism was in the LC, 52% of respondents said it was a minor problem, and 17% said it was a moderate problem.

One of the problems the data highlighted was the presence of bias against racial or ethnic minorities who are non-native English speakers. About 1 in 5 respondents chose "a little bit" when asked if LC student employees' verbal comments indicate a lack of respect for minority group members, and 17% said they had witnessed discrimination on the basis of country of origin. The following two open-ended comments directly addressed this issue:

- "I have observed tutors who were upset or expressed concern about working with students who have English as a second language because their sessions have been more frustrating or challenging with these clients."
- "When we were in person, if a client were to come in that was a minority race/ethnicity or spoke a different language, they would often be subject to staring."

These data suggest that more can be done to address bias, stereotypes, and discriminatory behavior toward non-native English speakers.

Respondents were also asked whether they had experienced or witnessed 12 different types of racial insensitivity or discrimination. Twenty instances of racial insensitivity or discrimination were reported overall—five by the people who experienced them, and 15 by witnesses. One respondent wrote in their qualitative comments, "Most racist experiences happen with clients, and they typically take the form of subtle microaggressions and discomfort. With peer educators, it's less common and less intense." The data confirmed that perspective: clients were the source of racial insensitivity/ discrimination in 55% of instances (n=11), peer educators were the source in 35% of instances (n=7), and faculty and administrative staff were each the source in 5% of instances (n=1). The most common forms of racial insensitivity and discrimination were sensing discomfort with one's race/ethnic group (n=5) or being singled out as the resident authority on issues related to one's race, ethnicity, or country of origin (n=5), followed by being subject to hostile stares (n=4). A more detailed breakdown of reported incidents of racial insensitivity or discrimination is provided in Table 1. These data suggest that more training on microaggressions and subtle forms of racial insensitivity may be beneficial in the LC. They also indicate that the LC should find ways to protect BIPOC employees from racial insensitivity or discrimination on

the part of clients. One BIPOC respondent suggested having “some sort of client-facing guidelines about appropriate language/interaction in general, but especially when it comes to discrimination.”

The survey also revealed some confusion and hesitancy about reporting incidents of discrimination that occur in the LC. When asked if they knew to whom they could report such incidents, 17% of respondents said “no.” Only 65% of respondents said they would be completely or mostly comfortable reporting incidents of discrimination that they experienced in the LC to LC faculty or administrative staff. Nearly 9% of respondents said they would not feel comfortable reporting incidents of discrimination that they witnessed to LC faculty or staff. However, all respondents said they felt confident that the LC would respond appropriately to such reports.

Finally, in their open-ended responses, student employees offered many suggestions for combating racism on campus and making the LC a more welcoming place for BIPOC employees, clients, professional staff, and faculty, including:

- Advertising at student organizations (such as CMSS) and multicultural events to get more diverse applicant pools.
- Provide opportunities for clients and employees to share anonymous feedback that then gets shared with and discussed by peer educators and faculty in a group setting.
- Displaying our Commitment to Antiracism in our space.
- Creating a professional development group devoted to creating resources for BIPOC students on topics such as “how to address when an educator makes a biased comment,” “how to embrace your home voice in your writing,” etc.
- Getting rid of racist pedagogy, especially related to “professional speech,” and indirectly advocating for code switching.
- Encouraging tutors to give diverse examples and push clients toward more diverse scholarship/resources for class projects.
- Offering training on problematic writing assignments and problematic content in student writing.
- Sharing our observations with faculty across campus.
- Training BIPOC student employees for how to respond to racism that might be directed their way.
- Training student employees what to do when they encounter racial bias or insensitivity in student writing, speeches, etc.
- Having professional development events, speakers, video materials, etc. centered on racism.

TABLE 1: Incidents of Racial Insensitivity and Discrimination in the LC

Type of racial insensitivity / discrimination	Source of discrimination (E = experienced; W = witnessed)								Total, by type
	Client		Peer Educator		Faculty		Admin. Staff		
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	
Called derogatory names, insulted, or verbally assaulted		1							**1**
Put down intellectually		1							**1**
Subjected to hostile stares	1	1		2					**4**
Dismissed after expressing their ideas or sharing their comments								1	**1**
Harassed or discriminated against because of a foreign accent or for speaking a language other than English									
Embarrassed, patronized, or treated negatively	1	1							**2**
Ignored, isolated, left out, or excluded									
Singled out as the "resident authority" on issues related to their race, ethnicity, or country of origin		1	1	2		1			**5**
Received derogatory or hostile communication		1							**1**
Intimidated, bullied, or threatened with physical violence									
Denied access to resources									
Sensed others were uncomfortable with their race or ethnic group	1	2	1	1					**5**
TOTAL, BY SOURCE:	**11**		**7**		**1**		**1**		**20**

Note: *Experiences of discrimination only reported when respondent identified as non-White; no instances of racial insensitivity or discrimination were reported for graduate assistants or office assistants, who were excluded from this table for that reason.*

IV. Conclusion

In the final two department meetings for the school year, the faculty and staff of the Learning Centers spent time reflecting on where we've been and what we've learned this year.

One of the challenges we faced (and will continue to negotiate) is finding an appropriate balance between the desire to act and the equally important (yet far less visible) work of educating ourselves, cultivating awareness, reflecting on our efforts, and soliciting feedback on our ideas. Aware of academics' notorious tendency to over-analyze, we began this work in the fall with a

heavy emphasis on action. However, several incidents and observations underscored necessity of proceeding with care and caution:

- The University Writing Center, after asking its consultants to complete an online professional development module on racism and antiracism in tutoring, received negative feedback from some of its BIPOC consultants, who felt the module had prioritized White tutors' need for education at the expense of BIPOC tutors' need for strategies for coping with racism.
- Several LC faculty in the group responsible for creating an antiracism module to be required of all on-boarding LC student employees expressed that they need more education themselves before they felt comfortable educating student employees.
- Our efforts to administer our racial climate surveys were temporarily delayed when we received mixed messages from different areas of the university about what our reporting obligations would be and how we should respond if we learned that discrimination had taken place within our walls.

We recognize that antiracism is not an accomplishment or a checklist. It is an ongoing commitment that requires humility, adaptability, creativity, and a long view. One of the lessons we learned this year is that doing this work well is going to take a significant investment of time and resources. We also recognize that there is not a standard or "right" approach to antiracism. The ways we engage in this work should be as diverse as the perspectives, personalities, and areas of expertise that we bring to it. In light of what we've experienced and learned this year, we make the following recommendations for continuing our antiracism efforts next year:

1. The LC should invest in one or more external consultants who can help us develop a shared vocabulary and foundational knowledge regarding justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
2. The LC should continue to offer protected time for engaging in antiracist reflection, education, and initiatives on the departmental, programmatic, and individual levels.
3. The LC should find ways to situate its antiracism efforts within learning contexts in order to demonstrate that antiracist pedagogy and other inclusive practices are not political talking points but instead fundamental to learning and learning assistance.
4. The LC should commit to developing a long-term vision for this work (potentially with the help of an external consultant). Where do we hope to be in five, 10, or 20 years?
5. If and when the LC produces "deliverables" (e.g., PAC document policy changes or an antiracism module for student employees), we should seek out consultation from internal and external consultants who can help us evaluate their potential impacts.

APPENDIX A

The Learning Centers' Commitment to Anti-Racism

In the past days, months, and years, we have witnessed overt acts of racism in our country, state, community, and campus. These include the brutal murder of George Floyd in May 2020, the white nationalist rally in Charlottesville in August 2017, the Ku Klux Klan recruitment fliers that appeared throughout the Shenandoah Valley in November 2017, the "Build the Wall" graffiti that appeared on the JMU campus in the wake of the November 2016 presidential election, and most recently, the erasure of "Black" from the words "Black Lives Matter" on the JMU Spirit Rock.

We also recognize that racially motivated violence, abuse, intimidation, and hatred are not the only ways that racism targets and harms Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). As law professor Rhonda Magee has written, racism asserts power in ways that minimize "freedom, access to resources, and sense of value in the world" for BIPOC and their white allies. Racism can be present in beliefs, actions, and inaction. It can be exercised both consciously and unconsciously—not only by individuals but also by groups, institutions, and broader structures or systems.

Covert racism (which includes a range of subtle, unconscious, and unintentional behaviors, attitudes, practices, and policies) has undoubtedly pervaded our community and campus without deliberate recognition. Covert racism is present when professors steer away from discussions of race to avoid heated or uncomfortable conversations, when they "tokenize" BIPOC students by asking them to speak for their races, and when they penalize BIPOC students' reactions to microaggressions (rather than pointing out the racism inherent in those microaggressions). Covert racism is present when students ignore or leave out their BIPOC peers, whether in group assignments or social outings. It's present when people assume that BIPOC students are either athletes or on need-based scholarships. Covert racism is reflected in the administrative power structures at JMU, which are disproportionately white.

The faculty, staff, and peer educators of the JMU Learning Centers join the many voices that are calling for an end to racism and white supremacy in America. We created this statement to guide us and hold us accountable for enacting our commitment to anti-racist pedagogy and practice.

Our role

Despite being a department with a commitment to inclusivity in a University that lists access, inclusion, and diversity as core qualities, the Learning Centers acknowledges our complicity in maintaining a status quo that privileges white students, staff, and faculty, as well as white ideas, white behaviors, and white ways of knowing, learning, and communicating. Within our walls,

BIPOC students, staff, and faculty have undoubtedly encountered the same forms of racism that they have elsewhere in our institution: exclusion, lack of recognition, white silence in the face of discrimination, white discomfort with the topic of race, assumptions that BIPOC are deficient or low-achievers in particular subjects, beliefs in the innateness of certain abilities (such aptitude in mathematics or language, or athleticism), and pressure to perform whiteness via assimilation and code switching, to name a few.[1] Indeed, the Madison Matters campus climate survey indicated that discrimination at JMU is widespread. In this 2015 survey of 1,865 students (263 of whom were non-white), 8.9% (128 students) reported experiencing racial or ethnic discrimination in a range of settings, from classrooms to dorms. Furthermore, more than one third of respondents reported witnessing discrimination based on race or ethnicity. Clearly, there is more work to be done for us to embody the values we espouse.

Our commitment

The Learning Centers has attempted to create spaces where BIPOC students, staff, and faculty feel at home; to train faculty, staff, and peer educators to recognize unconscious bias in themselves and others; to support BIPOC faculty, staff, and peer educators when they encounter prejudice; and to advocate for and affirm BIPOC students struggling with academic and disciplinary cultures that demand assimilation. A more specific list of our ongoing initiatives can be found here. These efforts are a start, but they are not enough. In order to deepen our commitment to antiracist practices and pedagogies, The Learning Center pledges to do the following:

1. Provide our peer educators, student and professional staff, and faculty with ongoing anti-racist training and professional development.
2. Ensure that peer educators, staff, and faculty receive feedback and recognition for their efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., these topics should be addressed in client satisfaction surveys, Faculty Annual Reports, and in peer educator evaluations of faculty).
3. Review and revise our recruiting and hiring practices, including the ways that meritocracy and affinity bias limit the diversity of our faculty, staff, and peer educators.
4. Revisit departmental decision-making processes to ensure that BIPOC voices and perspectives are heard, considered, and valued.
5. Review and revise the language of our department's "inclusive" value, with a focus on making it actionable and justice-oriented.

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[1] This sentence originally read: "Within our walls, BIPOC students, staff, and faculty have undoubtedly encountered the same forms of racism that they have elsewhere in our institution: exclusion, lack of recognition, white silence in the face of discrimination, white discomfort with the topic of race, assumptions that BIPOC are deficient or low-achievers in particular subjects, beliefs in the innateness of certain abilities (such aptitude in mathematics or language, or athleticism), and pressure to perform whiteness via assimilation and code switching, to name a few." JMU's legal counsel asked us to change the wording to avoid what could be perceived as an outright admission to illegal discriminatory behavior.

6. Use our spaces to promote the accomplishments of BIPOC students, scholars, innovators, experts, authors, and creators.
7. Ensure that our BIPOC peer educators, staff, and faculty have clear-cut avenues for support and processing, potentially in the form of a closed discussion group.
8. When appropriate, share anti-racist reflections, pedagogies, and practices beyond the Learning Centers via resources, conferences, symposia, and workshops.
9. Seek out collaboration and feedback on this work from outside sources, such as the Office of Access and Inclusion and Center for Faculty Innovation.
10. Reflect on and annually assess our antiracism efforts, allowing them to evolve as we make progress.

Enacting these commitments will help us adopt anti-racism as a lens for all our work, rather than relegating it to a sporadic discussion topic. We have suspended formal committee work for Academic Year 2020-21 to work on enacting these commitments.

APPENDIX B

Action Steps for Enacting the LC Commitment to Anti-racism

Commitment	*Action Steps*
1. Provide our peer educators, student and professional staff, and faculty with ongoing anti-racist training and professional development.	Create a plan to integrate training around important topics for the entire department and/or within each program.
	Offer a broad array of antiracism resources (personal, pedagogical, etc.) to faculty via OneNote.
	Create an antiracism Canvas module to be completed by all peer educators and office assistants as part of LC 101.
	Commit to one department-wide faculty development event per semester (e.g. Darius sharing his racism-related expertise surrounding counseling and psychology).
	Offer additional opt-in dialogue-based programming for faculty, staff, and peer educators (e.g. round tables, story exchanges, discussion boards, reading groups).
2. Ensure that peer educators, staff, and faculty receive feedback and recognition for their efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., these topics should be addressed in client satisfaction surveys, Faculty Annual Reports,	Ask faculty to articulate antiracism goals (personal and/or professional) as part of the FAAP.
	Add descriptions of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion work in examples of satisfactory/excellent teaching, service, and administration in the Policies and Procedures for Annual Performance Evaluation.
	Discuss and decide, as a department, whether individual faculty or programs should be required to report on JEDI work in faculty or program annual reports.

and in peer educator evaluations of faculty).	Develop question(s) for programs to use on their client satisfaction surveys that gauge clients' feelings of belonging during LC consultations or programming.
	Develop question(s) to include on Peer Educator Evaluations of Faculty Performance (administered every semester) that evaluate peer educators' experiences and perceptions of equity, diversity, and inclusion within their programs.
	Recognize and honor departmental and programmatic antiracism work at the end-of-year LC celebration, and potentially add a JEDI award.
3. Review and revise our recruiting and hiring practices, including the ways that meritocracy and affinity bias limit the diversity of our faculty, staff, and peer educators.	Engage in a departmental discussion about diversity in hiring *and* retention of diverse faculty, staff, and peer educators (What can we do better? What's worked? What hasn't? Why have we lost some of our Black faculty in past years?).
	Invite faculty, administrators, or other experts to train us on how to equitably meet the needs of faculty, peer educators, and staff in the LC.
	Consider and pursue meaningful, mutually beneficial partnerships with diversity-minded student/faculty organizations on campus (e.g. Latin Student Alliance, Asian Student Union) creating more recruitment and outreach opportunities.
	Require program directors to share the LC Commitment to Antiracism when recruiting and hiring peer educators, graduate students, and student staff.
	Require position descriptions for hiring to be consulted by the Office of Equal Opportunity.
	Reach out to former peer educators, staff, and faculty of color to determine how we have contributed to their sense of belonging, retention, and/or departure from the LC.

4. Revisit departmental decision-making processes to ensure that BIPOC voices and perspectives are heard, considered, and valued.	Survey faculty, staff, peer educators, alumni, and clients about their experiences and observations of racial dynamics, bias, and systemic racism in the LC.
	Within the departmental leadership team, discuss and work to be cognizant of who is involved in decision-making and develop ways to invite voices that are not present to the table.
5. Review and revise the language of our department's "inclusive" value, with a focus on making it actionable and justice-oriented.	Schedule a time to do this as a department, potentially with some examples/assigned reading beforehand.
6. Use our spaces to promote the accomplishments of BIPOC students, scholars, innovators, experts, authors, and creators.	Involve peer educators in conversations about how to use the LC space to promote this work.
	Discuss creating a physical display area such as a "wall of achievers" that is displayed prominently and changed/updated periodically.
	Consult administrators in the Center for Multicultural Student Services about what makes a space inviting, particularly regarding cultural aspects that could be missing or inhibited currently.
7. Ensure that our BIPOC peer educators, staff, and faculty have clear-cut avenues for support and processing, potentially in the form of a closed discussion group.	Form a "caucus" for BIPOC peer educators, staff, and faculty in the LC.
	Create an anonymous survey for peer educators and clients to record instances of perceived exclusion or discrimination as a way of tracking ways in which our department may contribute to the oppression and marginalization of others.
8. When appropriate, share anti-racist reflections, pedagogies, and practices beyond the Learning Centers via	Create a list of our anti-racist professional and scholarly work somewhere on the LC website (e.g. https://www.jmu.edu/learning/about/research.shtml)

resources, conferences, symposia, and workshops.	Annually share at least one aspect of the department's antiracism work at a JMU conference or event (e.g., the Diversity Conference or CFI's January/May Symposia).
9. Seek out collaboration and feedback on this work from outside sources, such as the Office of Access and Inclusion and Center for Faculty Innovation.	The JEDI Team will regularly review the university efforts being published around anti-racism so as to stay abreast of community work (for example the Campus History Committee).
	JEDI Team will intentionally reach out to a few campus partners with updates about our efforts.
	Ensure there is Learning Centers representation at JMU's annual Diversity Conference to facilitate networking and connections with other individuals and areas involved in JEDI work.
	Seek representation on our division's Diversity Council.
10. Reflect on and annually assess our antiracism efforts, allowing them to evolve as we make progress.	The JEDI Team will create an annual report that documents and evaluates the department's progress on our commitments and goals.
	Programs will report on their progress on these commitments and goals within their program areas—potentially through a standardized assessment and reporting tool.