ABOUT

The goal of Tulane’s Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health (CEMCH) Diversity and Health Equity Collaborative (DHEC) team is to continue to increase awareness of diversity and health equity issues among its students, specifically around naming and measuring racism and classism. The team also sought to strengthen and expand their ability to act on these issues. To do this, the team used the American Public Health Association (APHA) webinar *Quantifying Racism to Understand and Address Health Disparities* as the basis for a reading and discussion club.

Tulane’s CEMCH DHEC team consists of training program directors and faculty, Master of Public Health graduate students, and the Associate Dean for the Office of Student Affairs and Admissions. Two of the MCH trainee team members led and facilitated discussions for two of the three well-received seminars. As the project evolved, the target audience expanded to not only students but also to faculty and community partners as well.

The Tulane team also offered two *Undoing Racism* trainings to students, staff, faculty, and community partners in partnership with the Tulane Mary Amelia Women’s Center and the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond. Lastly, Tulane conducted a standardized survey of university faculty to gauge their interest, willingness, and ability to incorporate issues of race and racism in their classes.

THE NEED

By offering seminars and trainings, Tulane’s CEMCH has become effective at filling larger university gaps related to diversity and health equity. This focus on health equity has provided a foundation for students, serving as a resource and better preparing them for the diverse workforce and its needs. Within their specific department, they established a collective understanding and culture recognizing the need to address racial health equity, and that tackling this problem was both crucial and community-building. However, they sought to better institutionalize and expand some of these efforts.

Given this, the team wanted to expand their outreach to University faculty. As a first step, they developed a standardized survey that was disseminated to all University faculty regarding incorporation of issues of race and racism in the curriculum. Unfortunately, they did not receive a high response rate and found uneven buy-in to the overall process including lack of participation in the seminars and trainings among the various departments in the school. It is acknowledged that individuals have limited time, and that this topic is not a recognized priority for all, which may have been a factor in low response and participation rates. The Tulane DHEC team realized the larger need to change normative beliefs and behaviors around the need to address structural racism.
**APPROACH**

The DHEC encouraged teams to break their overarching goal into smaller action steps. To achieve their goal, the team developed concrete objectives around improved processes, training, and dissemination.

**ACTION STEPS**

**Short-Term**

- Plan and deliver 3-part seminar series: Racing Toward Equity, incorporating pre-assigned readings
- Offer two Undoing Racism trainings to students, staff, faculty, and community partners (in partnership with the Tulane Mary Amelia Women’s Center and the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond)

**Medium-Term**

- Disseminate standardized survey of school faculty regarding incorporation of issues of race and racism in their classes
- Conduct in-person interviews with key faculty, further exploring the results of the survey data

**Long-Term**

- Develop executive summary of findings (including recommendations) for school leadership
- Request racial equity be an agenda item for the all-school faculty retreat
- Cultivate relationships with students who are interested in furthering change

**IMPACT OF DHEC PARTICIPATION**

Major insights were gained from the faculty survey responses received, including assessing the pattern of those that were not completed. Moving forward, the DHEC team decided they wanted to use their time and resources wisely and are focusing on those faculty who were engaged in these issues and who participated in the seminars and subsequent trainings, as a model for other faculty and as a strategy to engage others. Similarly, as a result of the *Undoing Racism* trainings, the Tulane team offered a series of follow-up meetings to identify partners in moving this work forward and to continue to build community engagement. The team recognized the DHEC in-person meeting, the webinars, and virtual meeting with staff of the National Center for Cultural Competence as helping facilitate their overall progress.

They also plan to offer a series of events or seminars in the upcoming school year; it is anticipated that the school administration will continue to support and encourage these efforts. The Tulane DHEC team is also in the process of analyzing and strategizing about how best to use and disseminate the data collected from both the seminars and faculty surveys. Their ultimate goal is to not only examine and tackle individual racism and classism but also to address health equity at an institutional level—how public health and educational institutions are part of the problem and how they can instead be part of the solution.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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