



UA Recommendations:

Faculty Sensitivity Initiative

47th Session

2019 - 2020

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BACKGROUND

Overview

Across Penn there has been a general push to increase sensitivity training for all faculty across departments. Issues of racial, gender, and income insensitivity by faculty members have repeatedly been brought forward to the Undergraduate Assembly over the past year. The lack of faculty diversity in departments has also contributed to students' concerns in the classroom. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to create a more inclusive environment on campus for all students and faculty.

Current Status

The University of Pennsylvania offers a wide variety of trainings and programs across graduate and undergraduate schools. The two training initiatives that we would like to explore further are as follow:

1. Perelman Medical School Internal Training for Faculty, Staff, and Students (<https://www.med.upenn.edu/training/>)
 - a. Provides training on equal opportunity in the classroom through work with the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs (<http://www.upenn.edu/affirm-action/coaa.html>)
2. Center for Teaching and Learning Inclusive Teaching (<https://wwwctl.upenn.edu/Node/160>)
 - a. Provides resources and training for faculty to promote inclusivity in the classroom and across campus

Undergraduate Assembly Updates

The Undergraduate Assembly has met with the following administrative offices to discuss the expansion and promotion of faculty training:

1. Office of Vice Provost of University Life
 - a. Date
 - i. October 23, 2019
 - b. Recommendations
 - i. The office advocates for the university to mandate training for all university community members. Encourages for communication with Faculty Senate to explore the option of mandating trainings for department chairs.
 2. Office of the Provost
 - a. Date
 - i. November 1, 2019
 - b. Recommendations
 - i. The office encourages us to explore deeper into the efficacy of training programs for university staff. Urges the UA to discuss with Wharton Professor on value of diversity training
 3. Faculty Senate
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- a. Date:
 - i. November 13, 2019
 - b. Recommendations
 - i. The office encourages us not to pursue mandatory training for faculty but rather integrate them into current faculty meetings. Currently there is a committee that focuses on faculty sensitivity issues.
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STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Latinx Coalition

1. Constituent Experience
 - a. One student describes an experience during a class discussion about building the “perfect human.” The student found it problematic that no one in the class acknowledged the connections to eugenics that such a discussion warranted. Another student explained that faculty members sometimes fail to be sensitive to how class discussions can personally affect students in the room. One student recounted positive instances with professors who were more sensitive to who might be in their classroom, and found that improved her learning experience. In one such class this student explained that the professor had a debrief with students after a difficult discussion and required students to attend office hours at least once to have a better relationship with the students.
2. Recommendations
 - a. Some of the students mentioned that when professors implement sensitivity training or just general awareness of other cultures and experiences into the class syllabi it is easier to approach conversations in a more productive manner without invalidating the experiences of other students. Being more aware of how certain topics can lead to difficult situations is important for professors to understand. It is also vital for professors to bring more awareness to the intersectionality of subjects (such as race and socioeconomic status) instead of just focusing on one experience over another.

Lambda Alliance

1. Constituent Experience
 - a. Students stress that queerness is different from race as queerness is less visual and blurrier. Often professors could express beliefs or sentiments that are very homophobic or transphobic since they assume, due to heteronormative and cis-normative standards, that no members of the queer community would be present to hear their words. On the flip side, there are a few positive accounts from trans-identifying students whose professors included things like pronouns on a syllabus or class-wide questionnaire. All in all, factors like these contribute to how safe and included members of the LGBT+ community feel in different classroom settings.
2. Recommendations
 - a. The Lambda Alliance recommends that administrators educate certain departments about inclusivity and microaggressions in order to help professors better understand the impact they could have on different marginalized groups.

Penn First

1. Constituent Experience
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- a. Students struggle with generalizations of wealth and class by professors and departments. It puts students in a difficult and awkward position when professors expect that all students can afford the required resources. Students also expressed that at times it seems that not all professors understand the stressors and concerns that FGLI students face.
2. Recommendations
 - a. Penn First recommends that professors provide available resources for FGLI students on the syllabi. Advocates for the addition of tutoring and GIC information on large introductory course syllabi.
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UA RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

The Undergraduate Assembly recommends the following in order to address faculty sensitivity and create a more inclusive campus:

1. Expand Inclusive Teaching Workshops for all Penn faculty across the University
2. Integrate the Inclusive and Equitable Teaching program into all doctoral and master's students' curriculums
3. Expand the anonymous reporting system to allow students to report instances of bias in the classroom

Proposal

1. Expand inclusive teaching workshops for all Penn faculty across the University
 - a. Present and pass legislation within the Faculty Senate to mandate Department Chairs to organize Inclusive Teaching Workshops through the Center for Teaching and Learning
 - b. Contact Center for Teaching and Learning at ctl-help@lists.upenn.edu to set up inclusive teaching workshop
 2. Integrate the Inclusive and Equitable Teaching program into all doctoral and master's students' curriculums
 - a. Work with Department Chairs to integrate the Inclusive and Equitable Teaching program into their curriculum
 - b. Developing an online course with program coordinator Jamiella Brooks (brooksdj@upenn.edu) to allow for all graduate students to participate
 3. Expand the anonymous reporting system to allow students to report instances of bias in the classroom
 - a. Promote the use of the form by adding to the following websites
 - i. VPUL
 - ii. NGSS
 1. PennInTouch
 2. Campus Express
 - b. Mandate all professors add to end of syllabus
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