

Background on the presentation today by the CORE/SAG Students (seeking faculty senate support in creating a GenEd required course on racism for Fall 2021)

This project has been initiated by Mignonne Guy, assoc. professor in African American studies, as a response to the Movement for Black Lives, to the persistent and present racism in the country and in our community, Richmond, etc. This is also a response to a conversation with President Rao. Mignonne convened the Committee on Racial Equity (CORE) which has, to date, been composed of 15 diverse faculty members from throughout the university. CORE has been working closely with a group of students - who have called themselves SAG (don't know what that stands for - sorry). Together, CORE and SAG have been co-creating this course.

Their proposal is not unreasonable - they know it is not conceivable to immediately enroll 24k students. What they are putting forward is a plan for this to be required of all new students from 2021 on. The first cohort of new students (estimated around 4k) would have 4 years to take the course, which is necessary because in year one they would plan to accommodate 1000 students, then in year 2 2000 students, with an additional 1000 student capacity added each year until demand is met. They have identified, so far, around 50 faculty members from throughout the university that would be able to teach this course, and expect the first year to require the teaching effort equivalent to around 25 professors each teaching one course. They have positive commitments from most of the faculty they've contacted.

The model is not a traditional course. CORE would be creating a core set of virtual content, based on interviews and discussions with leading experts from across the nation. Each week, students would asynchronously (mostly) watch this content, and then following that would be discussion sections facilitated by faculty. Approximately 25 faculty members would be responsible for 3 discussion sections (meaning each of these discussion sections would be small - around 15 students). I may be off a little here or there in the numbers and specifics, but this is the gist of the proposal.

Mignonne stressed the work that has been done by the student collaborators, and she credits them with being instrumental to both initiating and conceptualizing this course. She wants the students to present the idea and proposal, but she will be there to fully explain any details, including current developments.

Faculty Senate is in a position to do a number of things: 1) Pass this to the entire Faculty Senate for discussion and a vote (either statement of support or resolution) 2) offer a statement of support from leadership and then move it up to full Senate, or 3) to ask questions and get back to them. Their proposal has already been supported to some degree by the Faculty Council, and it is headed to the General Education Committee very soon, and then to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.

I met with them (nobody else from the Student Affairs Committee could meet that day) and reported back to the committee. After some discussion, we have voted to support this statement moving forward:

"we endorse this effort on principle - as a well thought out faculty and student led effort to confront systemic racism at an institutional level. We see efforts like this as a core component of faculty governance and the academic freedom of the faculty, as a collective body, to shape the curriculum of our university. While we understand that there will be institutional hurdles to mount and important administrative details to sort out, we welcome the faculty senate's involvement in dialog about this important initiative."

They will present the course, whatever supporting details/documents they have, and their current status and standing.