

Commitment to Anti-Racist Action at TCNJ¹

While America and other parts of the world have demonstrated time and time again that Black lives are dispensable, the TCNJ community has done little to combat this viewpoint by demonstrating that Black faculty, staff, and students matter. We must act with urgency to address the crisis of anti-Black racism in our world and on our campus. The truth of the matter is that the college does little to nurture its Black members. Although TCNJ often speaks of “diversity and inclusion,” this initiative has been co-opted to make white allies feel comfortable while doing little to recognize and interrogate the ways in which Black people feel antagonized on campus. ***Diversity and inclusion initiatives must acknowledge how academia both benefits from and is complicit in white supremacy, the problematic history of predominantly white institutions (PWIs), and include a specific anti-racism agenda that extends beyond theory towards ongoing praxis.*** We have the choice to join in the efforts led by our own Black students, staff, and faculty to influence our community as stewards of justice and change. The brunt of this labor should not be on the backs of Black students, staff, and faculty. Below is a list of actions we must commit ourselves to at TCNJ in order to fight racism on our campus.

1. **We must commit ourselves** to creating an anti-racism standing committee that operates as part of faculty governance. The committee would be responsible for ensuring that the college carries out the proposed actions listed below, while developing and implementing additional anti-racism initiatives at all levels of the institution (academics, student life, housing, athletics, etc). The anti-racism committee will also be responsible for developing a campus-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategic plan and aiding every school, department, and campus unit in creating individualized DEI strategic plans that addresses their unique needs. Each unit and the anti-racism committee need to provide an annual progress report that will be shared with the TCNJ campus community each fall. Many universities have implemented this practice and the [University of Michigan](#) is an exemplar model.
2. **We must commit ourselves** to evaluating racist practices and biases in our academic and extracurricular programs. This evaluation should include longitudinal data collection that is both qualitative and quantitative in nature to identify roadblocks that adversely impact Black students, other students of color, and 1st generation college students. The results will be shared with the TCNJ campus community yearly.

¹ This document was adapted with permission from a letter written by students at Haverford College and Bryn Mawr College to the Bi-College Community.

[Samuels, C., Lopez-Bell, A., Oumer, R., Chaney-Williams, S., Collison-Cofie, A., Winston, Z., . . . , Shamsi, S. \(2020, June\). An open letter to The Bi-College Community \[Letter to The Bi-College Community\]. Haverford College, Haverford, PA.](#)

3. **We must commit ourselves** to creating a course on white supremacy and white privilege as part of the college-wide requirements. The course would be designed alongside Black students, faculty, and staff with the objectives of exploring the history and continued existence of race and racism to understand current social, economic, political, cultural, and structural conditions. It should educate on the history and continued existence of police brutality, explicit biases, and address microaggressions, cultural appropriation, and other forms of hidden biases. Ideally, this course would be taken by sophomore year. Our current Civic Responsibilities requirement is not enough.

4. **We must commit ourselves** to forming a credit-bearing, community-building summer program for Black students and other students of color, focusing specifically on introducing them to STEM and writing courses, as well as other preparatory courses, so that they may be further prepared for college life. In addition to this, emphasis should be placed on social justice, leadership, and successfully navigating a PWI. This program would be four weeks long, and offer the ability to earn 2 credits, free of cost, and also include social and educational excursions. This program could be modeled after summer programs offered by the [EOF program](#) and the [Cooperman College Scholars program](#), and extend into the students' first year at TCNJ.

5. **We must commit ourselves** to hiring Black faculty and faculty of color and increase attention to retaining and supporting existing faculty of color across all departments. HR must curate a list of diversity focused job boards and make public the forums in which they post jobs. Black students should be stakeholders and serve as representatives in faculty search committees. In order to aid with retention and professional development for faculty of color, the college should become an institutional member of Dr. Kerry Ann Rockquemore's [National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#).

6. **We must commit ourselves** to implementing yearly faculty diversity training that encompasses cultural competency, anti-racism, and the need for social justice in our day to day work. This training must be developed by people within and outside of TCNJ with significant expertise and scholarship in social justice work. The training could be done in conjunction with two already existing programs: The Summer Reading Program and/or Social Justice Day. By utilizing and adapting already existing programs that focus on DEI scholarship, TCNJ is able to provide an enriching and important professional development opportunity for its faculty. This training should also be part of new faculty orientation and include chapters and articles from the following list:

- Faculty of color experience
 - Cole, E. R., McGowan, B. L., & Zerquera, D. D. (2017). First-year faculty of color: Narratives about entering the academy. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 50(1), 1-12.
 - Harris, A. P. (2020). *Presumed Incompetent II: Race, Class, Power, and Resistance of Women in Academia*. University Press of Colorado.
 - Pittman, C. T. (2010). Race and gender oppression in the classroom: The experiences of women faculty of color with white male students. *Teaching Sociology*, 38(3), 183-196.

- Settles, I. H., Buchanan, N. T., & Dotson, K. (2019). Scrutinized but not recognized:(In) visibility and hypervisibility experiences of faculty of color. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 113, 62-74.
- Stanley, C. A. (2006). Coloring the academic landscape: Faculty of color breaking the silence in predominantly White colleges and universities. *American educational research journal*, 43(4), 701-736.
- Zambrana, R. E. (2018). *Toxic ivory towers: The consequences of work stress on underrepresented minority faculty*. Rutgers University Press.
- Students of color experience
 - Franklin, J. D. (2019). Coping with racial battle fatigue: differences and similarities for African American and Mexican American College Students. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 22(5), 589-609.
 - Harwood, S. A., Mendenhall, R., Lee, S. S., Riopelle, C., & Huntt, M. B. (2018). Everyday racism in integrated spaces: Mapping the experiences of students of color at a diversifying predominantly white institution. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 108(5), 1245-1259.
 - McCoy, D. L., Luedke, C. L., & Winkle-Wagner, R. (2017). Encouraged or weeded out: Perspectives of students of color in the STEM disciplines on faculty interactions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(5), 657-673.
- Staff of color experience
 - Gomez, M. L., Ocasio, K., Lachuk, A. J., & Powell, S. N. (2015). The “Battlefield”: Life histories of two higher education staff members of color. *The Urban Review*, 47(4), 676-695.
 - Jackson, J., & Flowers, L. A. (2003). Retaining African American student affairs administrators: Voices from the field. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 22(2), 125-136.
 - Mueller, J., & Pope, R. L. (2003). The relationship of demographic and experience variables to white racial consciousness among student affairs practitioners. *NASPA Journal*, 40(4), 149-171.

7. **We must commit ourselves** to creating and implementing a [“reparations fund”](#) towards a yearly allocation of funds to Black students in the form of grants, affinity groups, multicultural spaces, and individual expenses (books, online courses, and therapy). This fund will be pooled from tuition in the form of a semester fee of \$19.47². This fund should also be used to support the local Black community in Ewing and Trenton. Since TCNJ is unable to make monetary contributions to local organizations, funds should be used to (1) allow local Black organizations and programs to use TCNJ spaces free of charge and (2) host programs and events that speak to the local community. We expect the college to recognize the ways in which it has pillaged from the local Black community and use this as an opportunity to amend said relationships.

8. **We must commit ourselves** to formally recognizing and celebrating Black History Month and allocate more funds for events hosted by African American Studies and Black student organizations: e.g., keynote speaker(s), space rental, special catered dinner, and physical display/banner. These entities should not be expected to fundraise for events that benefit our

² This number was chosen based on the year segregation became illegal in New Jersey, although it [continues today](#).

campus community. Black members of our TCNJ community should not be the only attendees at events celebrating Black History. All members of the TCNJ community, including our Board of Trustees, should be encouraged and incentivized to attend these events.

9. **We must commit ourselves** to disbanding the police department so that it can be replaced with a more holistic model of public health and safety. Because the criminal justice system is racially biased, Black members of the TCNJ community cannot trust police to protect and serve them in the case of an emergency. Because police are more likely to respond with deadly force toward people of color, it is dangerous to have armed police officers responding to our students' emergencies. Rather, funding for campus police should be reallocated to existing mental health services (e.g., in order to increase the number of therapists of color and reserve counseling sessions for students of color) and to the creation of a specialized response team that is better equipped to handle mental health emergencies. This team might consist of members of TCNJ's [Care team](#), [mental health service workers](#), and an unarmed public safety officer trained in peaceful conflict intervention. In addition, TCNJ must reopen all racial discrimination cases against campus police and take action accordingly.

10. **We must commit ourselves** to divest, in and of itself, from any partnerships that may exist with companies that rely on prison labor. As [universities across the country](#) reckon with their reliance on the prison-industrial complex which is [a form of modern day slavery](#), TCNJ must publicly disclose the companies they work with and endowment funds with stock in the prison-industrial complex. [Columbia University](#) and [The University of California](#) system, which both divested from prison labor in 2015, provide strong models to emulate.

11. **We must commit ourselves** to recognizing the history of (and ongoing) racism at TCNJ that is reflected and celebrated in buildings and landmarks on and around our campus. We should engage in active, dedicated, research toward finding specific origins of these sites, and remove and/or rename them (as Trenton Hall was renamed), dedicating them instead to Black members of our community while showcasing the abhorrent history of these sites.

12. **We must commit ourselves** to revising course evaluations to include a question concerning the racial climate of the classroom to be implemented by fall 2021.

13. **We must commit ourselves** to holding members of the TCNJ community accountable for racist behavior that violates TCNJ's [Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace/Educational Environment](#). Racist remarks by faculty (regardless of tenure status), staff, and students should not be tolerated and dismissed as intellectual freedom. Harassment and/or discrimination of a student or employee due to their race/ethnicity violates this policy and should result in appropriately severe disciplinary action.

The anti-racism committee should issue a statement that includes a timeline detailing the plan for implementing the actions above, while maintaining transparency with the entire community as these commitments to making TCNJ an anti-racist institution are kept and acted upon.

Signed,

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