

Council of Racial Equity & Justice (COREJ) 2020-2022 Report Executive Summary

COREJ Description and Work Timeline

The mission of the Council on Racial Equity and Justice (COREJ; pronounced ‘courage’) is to elevate research and amplify faculty, staff, and student voices on matters of structural and systemic racism, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and interlocking systems of oppression and power within the College of Education (COE). COREJ is committed to the primary goals of conducting a racial equity audit to evaluate the status of racial equity and justice in our COE, use that audit to create a plan for the COE to address inequalities, provide a data-driven vision for the COE to advance racial equity and justice efforts, and to partner with other COE organizations to enact this vision into reality.

COREJ began its equity audit of the COE in Spring 2021 with an investigation into extant data on the Student of Color experience. That examination led to a data collection project in Spring 2022 to learn more about the experiences of Students of Color in the COE. This project is moving into the data analysis phase in summer 2022. Once data analysis has concluded for the student experience study and a writeup of findings is underway, COREJ will take up the next aspect of the audit: an investigation of the faculty and staff experience.

Framework

COREJ’s work is guided by an equity-minded lens. The equity-mindedness framework focuses on how institutions can alter their practices in order to create equitable spaces, and is made up of the following components: (a) racial consciousness and affirmation; (b) recognition of structural and institutional racism; and (c) a focus on institutional practices. COREJ uses equity-mindedness to explore ways that the COE can promote racial equity throughout its structure.

Student Experience Audit

Our audit of the student experience focused specifically on Students of Color, and was carried out by three subcommittees: the Student Life subcommittee, which focused on students’ out-of-classroom experiences; the Academic Experience subcommittee, which focused on students’ academic and in-classroom experiences; and the Access to Entry subcommittee, which focused on identifying barriers and inequities that students face with regards to applications, admissions, and enrollment in the COE. Each of these subcommittees reviewed existing data at the College and University levels, and provided individual findings and next steps which can be found in the full COREJ 2020-2022 Report. The common recommendation from all three subcommittees was that more data that specifically sought to better understand the experiences of Students of Color in the COE are needed in order to propose specific, meaningful, and relevant recommendations for how to move forward with racial equity and justice initiatives, policies, and practice. This common recommendation led to our current research project.

Current Research

Currently, COREJ is in the middle of an IRB-approved study designed to capture the voices and experiences of Students of Color in the COE. The study features a Racial Climate survey as well as interviews and focus groups with Students of Color. Data collection for the study is wrapping up at the end of May, 2022, and we will move into data analysis in summer 2022.

Next Steps and Requests

Over the course of the next calendar year, COREJ plans to analyze data from the student experience study (Summer 2022), write up and present findings from that study (Fall 2022-Spring 2023), and conduct an audit of the faculty and staff experience which will likely be followed by its own study (Fall 2022-Spring 2023). As we forge onward with this work, we request a continued commitment of support from the dean, faculty, and staff in implementing our findings and recommendations, as well as continued funding as needed to be able to continue doing our work.