

Popel Shaw Center launches the Dickinson Antiracism Project initiative

PSC mission and DAP initiative

On the dawn of the Popel Shaw Center for Race & Ethnicity's fifth anniversary and in commemoration of the 100 years since Esther Popel graduated as the first African-American woman at Dickinson, the Center began re-evaluating its mission in fall 2019.

Historically speaking, multicultural centers emerged from student activism in the late 1960s. This activism was multifaceted, encompassing efforts to increase access to higher education for underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, expand the intellectual scope of the curriculum, and create intentional support and engagement with the diverse racial, ethnic and national cultures that constitute higher education institutions. Embedded in these efforts to diversify the student population, curriculum and campus culture is a tacit critique of exclusion, power, and dominance.

Student activism, with the support of alumni, faculty, and staff, compelled many institutions to reimagine themselves, and activist efforts to draw attention to inequity, in various forms, has a formidable legacy at Dickinson College. Addressing the inequities fundamental to racial, ethnic, and national exclusion, and overlaps with other aspects of identity, is the primary way for diversity and inclusion efforts to transform the institutional culture for all people.

The PSC seeks to reorient its focus and The Dickinson Antiracism Project (DAP) is a 2019-20 initiative aiming to launch this new paradigm. DAP is a three part initiative focused on helping community members 1) Define antiracism as a concept and practice 2) Localize by exploring antiracist strategies at Dickinson and 3) Translate antiracism as a mode for addressing racism in multiple contexts, local, national and global.

DAP Goals and outcomes

The goal of DAP is to generate impactful, eclectic, and sustainable efforts that engage the Dickinson community in ongoing work to understand and practice antiracism. DAP complements the work of the Office of Equity and Inclusivity, Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Inclusivity, President's Commission on Inclusivity and the Inclusivity aspect of the Strategic Framework by focusing specifically on Dickinson's persistent struggle to embrace racial, ethnic and national diversity authentically. As a microcosm of broader national and global issues and tensions, the campus is a learning laboratory that provides a unique opportunity for its community members to develop awareness skills in ways that include vulnerability, listening, personal reflection and cross-cultural engagement.

DAP initiative outcomes: Community members will:

- Develop an evolving set of knowledges and skills to enact and practice antiracism in their communities

- Recognize the educational value of dialogue, active listening, and interactive experiences through active participation
- Learn how to practice antiracism in concert with other progressive, human affirming anti-oppression practices
- Understand antiracism work as a dynamic practice that necessitates ongoing education, reflection, and practice

2019-20 DAP Progress timeline:

In fall 2019, the PSC launched the Dickinson Antiracism Project (DAP) a three part effort to revise the Center's mission and reorient its programming toward incorporating antiracist work more intentionally. This process has included the following:

- The PSC, Waidner-Spahr Library, and English co-hosted reading groups focused on historian Ibram X. Kendi's acclaimed 2019 book *How to Be an Antiracist* on October 30, 2019. The group attracted 30 faculty and staff, who divided into two smaller facilitated discussion groups. The event culminated with a larger reflection on the book's potential implications for Dickinson.
- On October 2019 Waidner-Spahr Library also created a comprehensive antiracism research guide for campus community members seeking additional resources to continue this conversation: <https://libguides.dickinson.edu/antiracist/home>
- On February 11, 2020 the PSC's Director and Advisory Group finalized the revised Center's mission for fall 2020 onward.
- Summer 2020: The PSC begins implementing changes this summer including adding antiracist educational resources to the center's Dickinson website and incorporating the theme in its programming.
- Professor Kendi's Clarke Forum antiracism lecture, scheduled for February was cancelled because of inclement weather, and then because of the campus closing due to COVID-19 virus. The Forum expects to reschedule the lecture for 2020-21.

