

Dialogue on Race and Community

Table Dialogue Summary

On November 19, 2019, the Democracy and Dialogues Initiative of the Dodd Center helped to co-organize an event for the Storrs campus entitled “Dialogue on Race and Community.” During the two-hour event, participants witnessed a model dialogue among members of the UConn community that worked to highlight the diverse range of experience of race and racism at our University. Participants then had the opportunity to engage in facilitated dialogue of 8-12 faculty, staff, and students.

As part of their discussion, groups were asked to respond to the following questions:

- *What do you feel are the greatest barriers to creating a more diverse, inclusive and welcoming university culture?*
- *What concrete steps might we take as a community, as an institution, and as individuals to combat racism and build a more diverse and inclusive campus environment?*

Nineteen groups submitted notes on their dialogue. Below is a summary of common responses.

BARRIERS

In their discussions, many tables identified barriers that fell broadly into the categories of *institutional barriers* and *individual barriers* (recognizing, of course, that many of these cross categories or are mutually reinforcing).

The most commonly identified institutional barriers included:

- 1) the whiteness or lack of diversity of UConn (11);
- 2) the lack of explicit acknowledgement of the history and/or present reality of racism (8); and
- 3) the segregation among groups on campus (5).

The most commonly identified individual barriers included:

- 1) the prevalence of bias and/or microaggressions (12);
- 2) the apathy and/or complacency of individuals (8);
- 3) the lack of empathy or ability to listen (5); and
- 4) ignorance about the experiences of people of color (5).

CONCRETE STEPS

Turning to concrete steps that could be taken to address the challenge of combatting racism and building a more equitable university, both specific *actions* that both individuals and organizations could take, as well as *objectives or outcomes* that should be sought across a range of activities.

Of the specific actions, the most common were:

- 1) recruit and retain more people of color as faculty, staff, administration, and students (13);
- 2) convene and host more dialogues in various settings and with different constituencies (10);
- 3) require effective diversity/equity/anti-racist curricula with students/faculty/staff (9).

Of the objectives or outcomes, the most common were:

- 1) acknowledge racism and call out microaggressions where ever they occur (6);
- 2) “listen louder” to all voices, especially people of color (6); and
- 3) “get uncomfortable” (6)