

Diversity & Inclusion Meeting
May 25, 2018

Participants:

Dean Sten Vermund, Trace Kershaw, Frank Grosso, John Ndikum, Mike Yepes, Shermaine Hutchins, Jenny Ozor, Fredua Okosa, Lydia Kwarteng, Issa Ali, and Mahaya Clark.

ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES

- Students of color are not “witnessed” (no power, not being heard, don’t feel like they matter).
- The low turnout on the current conference call is because students feel that talking about it will not matter.
- Student participants made a point to state that they had a positive experience at Yale, but feel there are microaggressions that occur with no consequences. Further, there have been overtly racist experiences including verbal harassment of a YSPH student by a white male student.
- Trace communicated to the group that there are some limitations on what YSPH and Yale can communicate to students on consequences of individual who engages in microaggressions or racist behavior due to student privacy laws, but that we would like to work with students and Yale legal to find a solution so that we can track that situations are being adequately addressed. Further, even though a student may go through the available channels, they often are not able to achieve a desired outcome. Students feel the university at least needs the victim to know what is happening.
- Students felt that although the anonymous dropbox is available to voice issues, it is not clear how those comments are addressed and handled.
- The listening session at the Medical School with Vice President of Student Affairs, Kim Goff-Crews was not good. The administration was very defensive instead of listening. In addition, Chief Higgins attended in uniform; which included his firearm. It felt intimidating to some attendees.
- YSPH doesn’t have any support for students under racial-related stress.

POSSIBLE ACTION POINTS

- Students want to see Yale and YSPH adopt a zero-tolerance policy to these incidents.
- There was discussion about enhancing both YSPH orientation as well as curriculum to ensure that student feel YSPH is a space for all; not just a white space.
- Students want YSPH to acknowledge the reality that students are all coming in with microaggressions; that they are all a product of racism. This includes integrating history and issues into the curriculum.
- Students want YSPH to get all students sensitive to issues of races. Orientation is not enough; curriculum integration will have to take place. They want to see continuous training throughout their time at YSPH.
- Students also want bystander intervention training for students for when racism occurs. Many students don’t know how to address it when they witness it. This will decrease the gap between recognizing microaggressions and doing something about it.
- Faculty need training as well. Trace mentioned “undoing racism” training.
- There was discussion of having incoming students pick from a list of books on the topic before orientation. Sten mentioned “Invisible Man” by Ralph Ellison.