

Racial Justice Action Planning for All Units



SMITH COLLEGE

Contents

A Message From the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion	3
Introduction and Overview	4
The Need for Action Planning.....	5
Other Campus Resources	6
Action Plan Elements.....	6
Introduction.....	6
Unit Self-Assessment.....	6
Vision, Goals, Strategies and Metrics.....	6
Implementation Plan	6
Monitoring.....	6
Creating Your Action Plan	7
Step One: Establish Foundations	7
Step Two: Map Out the Planning Process.....	7
Step Three: Gather Information and Conduct Unit Self-Assessment	8
Step Four: Draft Action Plan—Develop Vision, Goals, Strategies, Metrics	9
Step Five: Review Plan with the Office for Equity and Inclusion.....	9
Step Six: Adopt Plan and Communicate Vision	10
Step Seven: Implement Action Plan	10
Step Eight: Monitor and Evaluate	11

A Message From the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion

True collaboration and deep learning at Smith College call for every student, faculty and staff member to feel that they belong. As Heather McGhee reminds us in *The Sum of Us*, “racism costs everyone” but by addressing it, “we can prosper together.” Racial justice means creating conditions in which all can thrive.

To reach every aspect of our community, we are engaging all units—i.e., academic and administrative—in a common yet customized process. Education, reflection and action planning will help each department set goals and develop practices to meet them. Your participation and input in this process are essential. Whether it's developing a new inclusive program or making sure more voices are heard in meetings, we can all find ways to make our work more effective and welcoming.

We can improve at many levels, from the individual to the institutional. The following guide provides the roadmap and tools for doing this work at the departmental level—the site at which so many of our interactions and processes play out. My team and I in the Office for Equity and Inclusion and collaborators across the college look forward to working with you every step of the way.

Warmly,

Floyd Cheung

Introduction and Overview

Community engagement is one of the themes of the [Toward Racial Justice](#) strategic plan for Smith College. Indeed, we can only make progress and grow as a community if we commit ourselves to doing the work of equity, inclusion and racial justice.

We can improve at many levels, from the individual to the institutional. Racial justice action planning focuses on the departmental level.

While some departments have been doing this work for years, this initiative engages every department in a common process of education, reflection and action planning. *Note:* If, for any reason, you have concerns about participating, please communicate with your manager, HR business partner or the vice president for equity and inclusion.

Unit Planning Support: Throughout this iterative process, units can count on the support of the Office for Equity and Inclusion (OEI) for consultation and guidance, and the Office for Institutional Research (IR) and Human Resources (HR) for providing and assisting with the interpretation of data. The Provost's Office serves as an important resource for academic departments. Financial resources, if needed, can be obtained via the normal budget process as well as by special request. Besides planning for their own changes, units are invited to propose division-wide and institutional-level changes as well.

This guide (based on UC Berkeley's departmental diversity initiative, identified as a nationwide model and used with permission and adapted for Smith) outlines steps for advancing racial justice by improving [equity, inclusion, and diversity](#) at the departmental level.

Unit planning efforts provide the opportunity for broad reflection on increasing our impact in programs, services, curriculum, learning environments related to diversity, equity and inclusion. This is a chance for departments to celebrate and expand on their successes in these areas, as well as to identify ways in which departments hope to deepen their work over the next several years. As the first principle of the [Toward Racial Justice strategic plan](#) states, "Because Smith was not originally designed for the diverse students, staff and faculty that we have now, we are called to reflect on our past and present to build a more just and inclusive future."

In carrying out this important work, we are committed to and guided by the following understandings of racial justice, antiracism, diversity, inclusion, and equity. These understandings were created by OEI in collaboration with campus community members and then ratified by the Cabinet. These are by our community and for our community.

Diversity: the broad range of individual and group differences of culture and circumstance, which contribute to the thoughts, knowledge, experiences and worldviews of a community. Some types of diversity are race, ethnicity, gender (including identity and expression), age, religion, language, ability/disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, rank, geographic region, nationality, citizenship, size and veteran status. We value diversity because it creates multiple benefits, including deeper learning, better problem-solving and more complex perspectives.

A commitment to DIVERSITY requires us to develop an awareness of who makes up our community and what their experiences and identities are.

Inclusion: the act of creating environments of belonging in which individuals and groups feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions so that members of the community can fully participate, shaping and even transforming the college as collaborators. This goal requires active, intentional and ongoing engagement with diverse people across the college. We value inclusion because it creates a spirit of true belonging and a sense of shared ownership in strengthening our learning community.

A commitment to INCLUSION requires us to make sure all community members are seen, heard, respected, and valued as full human beings and are encouraged to contribute to community life.

Equity: the responsibility to provide community members with fair and honest treatment, access and opportunity for advancement. We fulfill this responsibility by identifying and reducing barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups at all levels. In addition, equity calls on us to identify and address injustices, present and past, and prevent future injustices. We value equity because we affirm the humanity, worth and potential of our community members.

A commitment to EQUITY requires us to remove obstacles to full participation and recognition for members of our community, and to pursue justice for those unfairly denied full participation and recognition.

Antiracism: the process of actively opposing racism by identifying and challenging racial bias on personal, institutional, structural and cultural levels. Opposing racism necessitates cultivating an intersectional mindset that recognizes and appreciates the complex intersection of racism with sexism, ableism, classism and other forms of discrimination.

A commitment to ANTIRACISM requires us to work individually and collectively to identify, confront and dismantle manifestations of racism all around us, within ourselves and within our systems.

Racial Justice: a specific form of social justice that involves creating and supporting equal opportunity and access for everyone in our community in a manner that eliminates adverse treatment based on racialized identities. Racial justice work means implementing fair and equitable processes and addressing harms done to our community members by institutionalized and interpersonal racism.

A commitment to RACIAL JUSTICE requires us to fulfill the college's commitments to diversity, inclusion, equity and antiracism by collectively building a world in which everyone can thrive individually and in community.

The action-planning process integrates with other efforts such as the Academic Program Review process for academic departments. It can also be undertaken as a standalone project. In either case, each step lists tools to assist in departmental efforts.

The Need for Action Planning

Why should a department take on an action planning process? An action plan that incorporates equity, inclusion and diversity can help to

- Build inclusive climates that draw people together across difference. Diverse groups that truly include all members are proven to better facilitate deep learning and complex problem solving.
- Attract, hire and retain a diverse staff and faculty.
- Increase outreach to historically underrepresented student populations.
- Assess and deepen the impact of programs, services, curriculum and learning environments related to equity and inclusion and the mission of the college.
- Focus the department's messaging and communications to effectively highlight its efforts and leadership in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Again, we acknowledge that departments are starting from different places in their equity and inclusion efforts. Many departments have done significant work in this area, while others have yet to begin. Each of us has a role to play in this important work.

Other Campus Resources

[The Art of Leading Teams](#) presented by [The Wurtele Center for Leadership](#)

[The Sherrerd Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

[Smith Ombudsperson](#) offers Positive Culture Workshops for teams

[LinkedIn Learning](#) offers online trainings around racial justice, leadership and team dynamics

Action Plan Elements

All action plans for diversity, equity and inclusion should include the following elements.

Introduction

A brief overview of the plan, framing the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion to the department and noting the process for developing the action plan.

Unit Self-Assessment

A reflection on the department's current strengths, challenges, opportunities and needs in relation to diversity, equity and inclusion issues.

Vision, Goals, Strategies and Metrics

A concrete set of aspirational goals and strategies, along with metrics or indicators for measuring progress over the next three to five years.

Implementation Plan

A work plan describing concrete steps, responsibilities and timelines for putting the department's goals and strategies into practice.

Monitoring

What's changed since implementing the plan? What is working? What is not working as anticipated? Are there parts of the plan that need to be adjusted to achieve plan goals?

Creating Your Action Plan

This outline can be customized to fit the needs and culture of individual departments and offices. While certain facilitated conversations are built into the process, units should feel free to consult with OEI at any point. If your department has distinct features that make it hard to know how to proceed (e.g., it is a small department with few employees), please reach out to OEI for help. In addition, the provost's office is available to support academic departments. OEI liaisons will host periodic forums to discuss ideas and solve problems as well as to provide cross-departmental mentoring opportunities.

Step One: Establish Foundations

Estimated time for completion: two weeks

While some units and colleagues have firm foundations in racial justice work, it benefits all of us across the college to share a knowledge base. Most departments can benefit from agreeing on ground rules for how to conduct conversations about a topic that many find sensitive and even difficult. Finally, the following items create a relationship between your department and the Office for Equity and Inclusion, which is your partner in this work.

1. Have your team complete the pre-session homework (see "Tools" below).
2. Schedule a time for your entire team to meet with OEI facilitator(s) for the *Foundations for Anti-Racism Work* training. The training includes:
 - a. guidelines and frameworks for group discussion
 - i. Frameworks for effective and honest reflection at individual and departmental levels
 - ii. How to avoid pitfalls such as shame, blame, or misplaced confidence
 - b. foundational social justice concepts, frameworks and vocabulary
 - c. opportunities for engaged learning and discussion as a team
3. Have the team complete the post-session reflective assignment.

Tools

[Toward Racial Justice Principles](#)

[Dr. Beverly Tatum: The ABC's of Representation in Education](#) (1:04:27–1:12:25)

[Foundations Workshop Pre-Survey](#)

[Foundations Workshop Exit Ticket](#)

NOTE: Steps 2 through 6 provide a basic outline for organizing and implementing your strategic planning process.

Step Two: Map Out the Planning Process

Estimated time for completion: one month

Identify department liaison(s), form a planning team, organize and launch the planning process with OEI.

- After unit leadership is oriented to the planning process, units will choose a contact person to function as the unit's OEI liaison for action planning. Liaisons will participate in a planning process orientation that will provide an overview of the planning process, information about the timeline and available support, and opportunities for learning and reflection on implicit bias. In addition to being OEI's primary

contact in the action planning process, OEI liaisons will periodically meet with other liaisons for facilitated conversations to solve problems and exchange ideas. Liaisons may also help guide departments and offices in their work, and serve as a link to other departments for unit mentor/mentee opportunities. (This way, units that are further along in their planning can assist those who are in the earlier phases of this work.) *Note:* While some colleagues of color will want to serve as a liaison, please don't make assumptions. When seeking volunteers or delegating this important work, please consider the identities of team members and the potential burden some may feel as opposed to others.

- [Liaison Responsibilities](#)

- If your department or office is large, consider designating a planning team to lead the planning process instead of one OEI liaison to coordinate planning efforts. Alternatively, larger departments or offices may wish to engage in action planning in smaller subunits. The goal for doing this work is to engage all staff members in examining issues of diversity, inclusion and equity. Taking a team approach is critical to establishing broad interest and ownership. When selecting members for the planning team, be sure to include key staff and faculty who work on diversity and equity efforts. In some cases, units may also wish to include graduate or undergraduate students on the planning team. Smaller departments or offices may wish to link up with other similar units. OEI is available to help think through these scenarios.
- Introduce the action planning process to your planning team. Hold a kick-off meeting to formally launch your process (invite an OEI partner to join it if you would like). During this meeting, the planning team will begin to customize the planning process to fit the culture and structure of the department, develop a timeline for completing the plan and have a preliminary discussion of key issues.
- Develop a work plan to support the work of the planning team and, if appropriate, to help integrate your equity, inclusion and diversity efforts with other unit efforts (e.g., the Academic Program Review process).

Tools

[Planning Guide: checklist and worksheet](#)

Step Three: Gather Information and Conduct Unit Self-Assessment

Estimated time for completion: three to four months

This step will help create a better understanding of the current state of equity, inclusion and diversity within your unit. It also helps in completing the introduction and self-assessment portions of the action plan.

- Begin the reflection process by reviewing [Towards Racial Justice at Smith](#) and identifying key areas of connection to unit goals and priorities. Suggested reflection questions can be found in the toolkit.
- Review unit equity and inclusion data packet, if available. Once requested, available and relevant data will be provided by the Offices of Institutional Research or Human Resources in conjunction with OEI. The amount and type of data available to review will vary with each unit—many units will receive aggregated or institutional-level data to avoid privacy breaches and to increase reliability.
- Conduct a self-assessment of the current state of equity, inclusion and diversity within your unit using the tools in the toolkit. The assessment should reflect what the planning team has learned from the data review process.

Note: Presentation of the self-assessment can be done in any format the planning team chooses. Please see the Action Plan Template for more detail about what to include.

- To encourage broad unit commitment, this may be a good time to engage a range of stakeholders in reflecting on the unit's equity, inclusion, and diversity work and in reviewing the self-assessment document. In particular, you may wish to share emerging ideas with unit leaders—both faculty and staff—for their input and insight.

Tools

[Information Gathering and Data Guide](#)

[Towards Racial Justice Reflection Questions](#)

[Unit Self-Assessment Worksheet](#)

[Stakeholder Engagement Tools](#)

Step Four: Draft Action Plan—Develop Vision, Goals, Strategies, Metrics

Estimated time for completion: one to three months

This step supports your unit in articulating key aspirations in the areas of equity, inclusion and diversity and in developing a set of strategic goals and activities for enhancing your work on these issues over the next three to five years. The unit's goals and activities should reflect what was learned in the self-assessment process and may also include other priorities you wish to pursue within your area.

- Review your unit's self-assessment analysis. Study and synthesize the outcomes of your review of [Towards Racial Justice](#), data gathering, self-assessment and stakeholder engagement efforts (e.g., surveys and focus groups). Depending on how the unit has structured its planning process, this can be done at the planning team level or by a larger group—one that potentially includes additional faculty, staff and students. Be sure to look at all areas of the unit.
- Develop unit goals, strategies and metrics. Drawing on this synthesis, set a manageable number of meaningful, specific goals that the unit can commit to addressing over the coming few years. Identify concrete strategies and actions that will be needed to achieve each goal, along with metrics that can be used to measure success.
- To encourage broad commitment to the unit's equity and inclusion plan, you should plan to include a range of stakeholders in developing—or at minimum reviewing—goals, strategies and metrics.
- Draft your full action plan for equity, inclusion and diversity with the required elements of introduction, self-assessment, goals, strategies, metrics and an implementation strategy.

Tools

[Stakeholder Engagement Tools](#)

[Vision and Goal Setting Guide](#)

[Action Plan Template](#)

Step Five: Review Plan with the Office for Equity and Inclusion

Estimated time for completion: one month

Share your draft plan with your **department head and/or area vice president** for review and discussion. Incorporate feedback.

Then share it with the **OEI team contact**. OEI's review will assist in finalizing and clarifying any strategies, goals and metrics. They can also help determine what key institutional support may be needed, such as training or data needs.

This review assists OEI with ongoing improvements to the action-planning process and provides a time to reflect on ways in which collaboration and partnership can be enhanced across campus to support your goals and those of the campus as a whole.

Following this meeting with your unit's OEI contact and after final edits are completed, schedule a meeting with the **vice president for equity and inclusion**. This meeting should include your department head and your planning team. For academic departments in the Academic Program Review process, the meeting with the vice president for equity and inclusion can take place either before or after the completion of the Academic Program Review itself, whatever is most useful to the unit.

At this meeting, please be prepared to discuss the following:

- An overview of your strategic plan for equity, inclusion and diversity.
- Areas in which institutional support may be needed to achieve success and an overview of your implementation process.
- Your experience participating in this process.

At this point, it is important to designate an ongoing point person from your department for maintaining communication, sharing information and networking with other departments. In many cases, it may make sense for the OEI liaison to fill this role.

Step Six: Adopt Plan and Communicate Vision

Estimated time of completion: one to two months (ongoing)

- Following your own unit's culture and processes, formally adopt your new action plan for equity, inclusion and diversity. The goal for the adoption process is to build a shared understanding of your unit's equity, inclusion and diversity goals and to ensure broad ownership of the strategies in the plan among faculty, staff and students.
- Develop a communications plan for sharing your new strategic goals and priorities with members of the unit, as well as with external stakeholders. This will include revising your website, outreach materials and other resources. The **Office of College Relations** can assist in posting your plan on the OEI website.

Step Seven: Implement Action Plan

Estimated time for completion: variable, depending on scope of plan

Launch internal work plan with benchmarks, timelines and unit support.

- Revisit and refine implementation of the Action Plan. The unit's implementation plan should identify leaders for each area of work, establish an estimated timeline for specific strategies, and describe concrete steps and responsibilities for instituting the action plan. As described in the fourth step, you should also designate a point person to coordinate and monitor overall implementation—this person can be the existing OEI liaison, a leader from the planning team, a key staff member involved in equity and inclusion programming, or someone who holds another unit diversity/equity role. Be sure to share the implementation plan throughout the unit.

- Continue to plan for resources such as training sessions and workshops, online materials, reference guides, and services that will help in successfully executing your new plan.
- The provost's office is available to support academic departments.

Step Eight: Monitor and Evaluate

Periodic three-month check-ins recommended

Set a monitoring time table, and adapt it as necessary.

- Plan ahead for check-ins. In addition to unit monitoring of planned efforts, please keep OEI informed of the progress through periodic check-ins.
- Publish progress reports on the OEI website
- Participate in the OEI Annual Action Planning Summit by reporting back to the community with update presentations on implementation progress. Presentations will be summarized in the OEI Annual Report on Action Planning.
- Midpoint reviews are held two to three years after units have completed their plans and begun implementation. They provide an opportunity to share more detailed progress updates with OEI and to make any revisions or adjustments.

More broadly, these reviews help keep the campus informed about equity, inclusion and diversity efforts at the college and highlight new challenges, needs and resources for supporting success in these areas. Share your plan and successes. Please contact the Office for Equity and Inclusion for ongoing support as needed.