

Dear UNT Anthropology Students for Equity,

We would like to begin by thanking you for calling our attention to student and alumni concerns about equity. We agree on the need to directly address issues of race and racial inequality in our departmental processes of recruitment, teaching, research and mentoring. In the following, we commit to expanding our efforts to be more deliberate about doing anti-racist work in our department and university, and more intentional in supporting BIPOC students, staff and faculty.

This response represents the culmination of multiple discussions over the summer consisting of extensive online dialogue, two 2-hour Zoom meetings, and individual faculty actions.

We hope that your letter and this response serve as the start of a much longer, ongoing conversation. With the goal of facilitating actions towards a community based in equity, we will seek to foster conditions for open and honest dialogue to help us learn what students are experiencing and observing. Toward this goal, we propose the following forums for dialogue to serve as intentional platforms for addressing race, racism, and other forms of inequity:

- Town Halls: organized twice per semester, once for undergraduates and once for graduates to engage directly with faculty and staff
- Grad Student “Labs”: regular discussions on inequity incorporated into the graduate program

Finally, to ensure accountability to the commitments listed below, we will form departmental sub-committees to track and evaluate progress. We will welcome student participation on these committees.

Lobby for defunding the university police and to create alternatives to policing on campus.

“For 2020, the police budget for UNT is \$5.3 million. The UNT Police Department receives 7x more funding than the Multicultural Center, Pride Alliance, Office of Equal Opportunity, Equity and Diversity, and Diversity and Inclusion combined. Identity based organizations receive no guaranteed funding. We demand that the department collectively engage during the 2020-2021 academic year and beyond in formal lobbying to the Dean and higher levels of administration within the University to: defund the university’s police, establish non-police alternatives for nonviolent calls and calls involving people with mental illness or a drug-induced crisis, and for a police oversight board that includes a majority BIPOC students, faculty, and staff. Advocate for less punitive, more constructive, and reformist approaches to resolving non-violent drug possession. Lobby to protect students from drug convictions to ensure that they remain eligible for financial aid. Advocate that UNT embraces reality-based drug education centered on harm reduction, along with providing services like Narcan distribution for free on campus.”

We agree on the need to examine and challenge UNT’s budget, particularly the disproportionate amount of funds allotted to the Police Department in relation to the Multicultural Center, Pride Alliance, Office of Equal Opportunity, and Division of Institutional Equity and Diversity. We also recognize the need to push toward non-policing alternatives for nonviolent calls, particularly those related to mental health and drug-induced crises; advocate for more constructive and less punitive responses to non-violent

drug possession; and, lobby for the protection of students from drug convictions to ensure that they remain eligible for financial aid.

We are seeking to learn more about how we can contribute to campus efforts toward an equitable police presence on campus. We are investigating coalitions of students and faculty working towards this goal to see how we can support their efforts.

Lobby the UNT Administration to declare UNT a Freedom City.

“We demand that the department collectively lobby the UNT administration to declare the university a Freedom City during the 2020-2021 academic year and beyond. UNT should not honor any U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention requests. We also demand that all faculty and staff of the Department of Anthropology participate in the Eagle Dreamer training program and advertise it to students.”

We commit to advocating for the declaration of UNT as a Freedom City. We recognize that more collective action is necessary to not only support, but also join, the efforts of our colleague, Dr. Mariela Nuñez-Janes, and groups like the Multicultural Center, the Latina/o and Mexican American Studies program, the Women’s and Gender Studies Program, Mueve, and the North Texas Dream Team to fight for more just conditions for undocumented members of the UNT community. Together, we pledge to strengthen their continuous efforts at lobbying the UNT administration to:

- Prohibit ICE and CBP from campus job fairs
- Demand that the UNT administration and campus police rely on the sensitive locations memorandum to ensure that ICE enforcement actions are not conducted on campus
- Educate police, faculty and staff on the requirement for immigration warrants to be signed by immigration judges

The department’s full-time faculty have all registered for Eagle Dreamer training, and we will encourage part-time faculty to take training when scheduling permits.

Improve the hiring and recruiting process of faculty candidates.

“We demand full transparency about our department’s hiring process and methods. We demand a process and strategy with transparent metrics for hiring and attracting BIPOC candidates, especially Black anthropologists. There are many networks the department should tap into for recruitment of BIPOC candidates, such as the Association of Black Anthropologists and other BIPOC led groups within the AAA and SfAA. Actively work to dismantle biased recruiting and hiring of candidates by reviewing language in job descriptions and include a diversity statement that encourages BIPOC and diverse gender-identifying persons to apply to jobs within the department. Hiring committees should be diverse and always include BIPOC representation to ensure candidates are given fair and ample opportunity.”

We commit to redoubling our efforts at recruiting and hiring BIPOC anthropologists for future positions. Toward this goal, we pledge to lobby the administration for diversity hires. We also commit to ensuring that job calls include explicit commitments to diversity. Specifically, we will: 1) advertise positions via open source recruitment sites that reach a range of audiences; 2) prioritize work devoted to race and racism within our specialty areas; 3) establish metrics that

value scholarship for and by BIPOC communities often overlooked in the academy; 4) finally, continue to include BIPOC faculty on hiring committees, but also reward this additional labor through merit and pay.

Support current BIPOC faculty equitably.

“We demand that the department support current and incoming BIPOC faculty equitably. We demand that white faculty and department administration recognize that BIPOC faculty members live the racism that is deconstructed and theorized about in the classroom. Do not elevate “exotic,” international, or urban work over the critical work done in spaces closer to home by BIPOC faculty. This lived experience of BIPOC is an asset to the anthropology department, but does not mean that the labor, interdisciplinary work, and activism surrounding racial issues and pedagogy about critical race should be disproportionately asked of, or be the responsibility of BIPOC faculty. We see that BIPOC take on a disproportionate amount of this work and we demand that the department recognize and value the labor of BIPOC faculty and staff by providing formal avenues for documenting and recognizing their work. Part of this recognition demands that the department acknowledge the labor and expertise of BIPOC faculty when accomplishments of the department are presented to UNT administration, communities of practice, and the public. This often invisible labor should be rewarded in material ways, such as promotions and annual reviews. Lastly, we demand that the department do a thorough review of salary equity, especially considering the unaccounted work that BIPOC faculty take on, and make adjustments to salary. We want to see structured policy about how the department is actively addressing these issues.”

We agree that BIPOC faculty endure inequitable and disproportionate expectations and lack necessary means of support. We recognize the need to correct salary and labor inequities based on gender, race, and ethnicity, and commit to processes that identify and remedy them. To this end, we redouble our efforts to engage in and support the work already being done at the college and university levels by anthropology faculty. Dr. Alicia Re Cruz has participated on multiple university committees addressing racial and gender inequities in hiring and promotion processes, and Dr. Mariela Nuñez-Janes created La Colectiva, a faculty peer-mentoring group for women of color. Going forward, we commit to lobby the administration to compile salary data in reference to race and ethnicity. We pledge to reward the often-invisible additional labor conducted by BIPOC faculty. Faculty will continue to meet regularly with the department chair to monitor distribution of work expectations and ensure progress towards tenure and promotion.

We recognize the need to be transparent about how faculty are evaluated and rewarded. We will post our Promotion and Tenure/Merit criteria on our department webpage. We also recognize the need to be attentive to what students are observing and experiencing. As part of our forums for dialogue, we will seek to know from students what information they would want to know regarding faculty salary, promotion, and merit.

Recruitment and Retention of BIPOC students.

“We demand to hear formalized strategies to recruit more BIPOC students, especially women. There should be more resources made available to support minority students, especially online students, as they go through the program. No one BIPOC professor should be expected to “shoulder the burden” of advising all BIPOC students.”

We recognize the need to be more intentional in how we recruit BIPOC students. Steps include strengthening our holistic review assessments and rubrics to consider applicant attributes often missed by more traditional academic metrics. We also pledge to formally track admissions data on race, ethnicity, and gender. We will make demographic data on the current graduate student body available on the departmental website. We vow to incorporate recruitment into our research and pedagogy, and be more intentional about reaching new audiences via social media, and through our engagement with local schools and community colleges. Additionally, we commit to reinforcing our mentorship programs, such as the grad-undergrad student Padawan mentorships, graduate admissions seminars, and faculty participation in the McNair Scholars program.

At the same rate, we seek to better understand how we can support students. We commit to openly engaging with students to learn what kinds of support are needed through the town halls and graduate “labs”.

Provide anti-racist training.

“We demand yearly anti-racist training made available for free to all professors, staff, and students in the department and required at least once for all new and existing faculty and staff, starting in the academic year 2020-2021. Professors of out-sourced classes such as Physical Anthropology and Archaeology should also be required to attend. While we are aware there is anti-racist training at the university level, we demand that the department host their own “unworking racism” training. This work should not fall to the department’s faculty or staff, but to educators that are trained in providing, anti-racist and decolonizing workshops. The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond is a well-known and respected organization that offers Undoing Racism training and should be considered.”

We commit to instituting regular anti-racist training for all faculty, staff and students in the department that will be required in addition to the University-mandated training. Although we are unable to require attendance for faculty from other departments, we will strongly encourage their participation. Additionally, we commit to attending and participating in the University’s annual Equity & Diversity conference, and will continue to incorporate anti-racist training into the graduate student orientation process.

We have initiated a plan that reconceptualizes the undergraduate curriculum to focus more on cultural anthropology, making the four-field approach optional. After extensive discussion, we concluded that this was our best option given student concerns about courses outside of our department and our constraints on hiring new faculty. The plan is currently making its way through the university approval process.

Intentional conversations around race and racism.

“We demand continuous intentional, structured, and formal conversations, starting in Fall 2020, about racial equity issues in the department between professors, staff, and students.”

We will institute a town hall that invites students, faculty and staff to directly engage with issues related to race, racism, and inequity. Initially these town halls will be organized twice per semester, once for undergraduates and once for graduate students. Building on the town halls, we will incorporate conversations about race, racism, and other forms of inequity into our

graduate curriculum through the introduction of regularly-meeting “labs” during the semester. Finally, we commit to including anti-racism statements in our syllabi and “opening” our office doors to such conversations.

Proactively support BIPOC students.

“We demand that you proactively foster an environment where BIPOC students can be comfortable sharing their experiences without fear of retaliation. Students who vocalize disaffection due to race, ethnicity, LGBTQIA+ identity, or gender should not have their standing, funding, recommendations or any other form of support altered in any way from the department or its faculty. The department should seek out and share information about spaces where BIPOC students can speak about their shared experience, including on-campus networks and farther reaching professional networks of BIPOC anthropologists. The department should be prepared to support BIPOC students (including online students) after graduation through the aforementioned networks of BIPOC anthropologists, by connecting BIPOC students with organizations seeking job candidates, and/or providing letters of recommendations for job seeking.”

We commit to being more proactive in creating spaces and opportunities for BIPOC students to share their experiences without fear of retaliation. We will actively share information about on-campus and off-campus events and organizations that support BIPOC students, and will make website links to the Multicultural Center calendar, Pride Alliance, Women and Gender Studies, LMAS, and African-American Studies events available. We commit to creating mentorships for BIPOC and 1st generation college students with the goal of connecting students with professional networks and job opportunities.

Within the department, we pledge to create opportunities for students to speak out about behavior in the classroom and elsewhere on campus without the fear of retaliation and ridicule. In addition to town halls and discussion labs, we will institute a website portal for students to anonymously express concerns (discussed in further detail below). We vow to provide support for student initiatives that form groups to address inequality on campus. We will reinforce our student/faculty liaison position to continue serving as a conduit of undergraduate representation to the faculty, and will continue to invite the liaison and a GASA representative to faculty meetings.

Finally, we commit to teaching approaches that work towards addressing and dismantling the institutional racism within the discipline, academy, and classroom. We acknowledge the need to examine our own teaching practices for how they implicitly include and exclude students.

Revise theory and syllabi.

“We demand the syllabi for all graduate courses, especially “Anthropological Thought and Praxis I”, “Anthropological Thought and Praxis II”, and the undergraduate course “Development of Anthropological Thought” be revised and adjusted to include more BIPOC theorist immediately for Fall 2020 courses and beyond. Courses should devote more time to race and critical race theories in coursework along with structuralism, political economy, postmodernism, and Marxist theories that we are taught. An absence of BIPOC theorists from these courses sends the message that BIPOC pedagogy is not important, that these scholars have nothing to contribute, and that BIPOC students are not welcome in the discipline. The current course

structures perpetuate the belief that the contributions of non-whites do not matter, and miss out on their incredibly colorful, important, and powerful perspectives. Professors should also revise works cited within presentations and within class discussions. There needs to be an extensive effort to ensure students are aware of how anthropologists have influenced the communities they interact with, how their work has affected many other marginalized communities, and how the legacy of their work continues to affect marginalized communities, particularly BIPOC ones. Since many of the works in the traditional anthropological canon are derogatory towards the identities of marginalized students and often frame BIPOC as incapable, unintelligent, or “savage,” this can be mentally difficult for students who already face the pressure of proving their worth in an institution which does not value BIPOC perspectives and contributions. When teaching the traditional canon, the department must accordingly ensure students have proper access to mental health resources in and outside of the university.”

Several faculty revised their course syllabi this summer in response to your demands.

In ANTH 4021, Development of Anthropological Thought, curriculum and instruction will situate and problematize the discipline’s founding within the colonial encounter and capitalist enterprise; prioritize a critical examination of all original source material, especially those demonstrating covert and overt racist/racialized discourse; ensure attention is paid to the intellectual, political and social consequences of Eurocentric, androcentric and otherwise racist/sexist/xenophobic perspectives throughout the development of the discipline; decenter the traditional canon by incorporating marginalized voices and authorship, including but not limited to BIPOC scholars and “research assistants”; dedicate a page within the ANTH 4021 Library to decentering the canon; and develop assignments and evaluations ensuring UNT Anthropology Majors understand the gravity of the discipline’s complicity in racial inequity. Due to the sensitive nature of the content and subsequent discussions, contact information for campus resources and emotional support services will be made available both within course syllabi and Canvas home pages.

ANTH 5010, Theory and Praxis I, has been revised this year to add an explicit focus on the role of race in the development of anthropological theory. Race has become one of four themes in the course, and the other three themes have been modified to link to issues of race. The percentage of readings by BIPOC authors has increased from 25% to 60%. Students will examine how race has been theorized in anthropology; how anthropological theory has been silent on race; and how BIPOC scholars have been underrecognized in the field. In addition, “classic” publications by white anthropologists have been paired with readings that either examine the racial assumptions and biases of those anthropologists, or present a different perspective on the same topic by a BIPOC anthropologist.

ANTH 5021, Theory and Praxis II, has been revised to double the number of readings by BIPOC scholars. New lessons on decolonization and critical race theory have been added to the course. Additionally, other lessons have been revised to highlight the contributions of BIPOC and global south anthropologists in applied anthropology, and to expand discussions on neoliberal ideology and policy to include racial capitalism.

In general, we commit to continuing to review all course syllabi to include more BIPOC scholars and themes related to race and racism. We also recognize the need to highlight and question the colonialist legacy of anthropology, and how the discipline has marginalized BIPOC scholarship and communities. Further, we will devote more class time and attention to contextualizing the canon, to examine the uneven power relations between anthropologists and

the communities with which they have worked. Finally, we pledge to hold our own research and pedagogy ethically accountable to the communities in which we live and work.

Invite BIPOC speakers.

“Include BIPOC anthropologists and researchers in at least 50% of class and departmental events that involve guest speakers, starting in the 2020-2021 academic year and continuing after, to create space for the voices of BIPOC to discuss their work instead of limiting it to white experiences. This metric should be tracked by a member of UNT Anthropology administration and made available annually or at the request of any faculty member, staff, or student.”

We commit to increasing the number of BIPOC speakers at department events. Building on our faculty’s leadership in organizing the International Year of Indigenous Languages speaker series (2019-2020) and annual Anthropology EXPO, we pledge to be more intentional about whom we invite to campus to speak. We will track guest speakers and make the list available on an annual basis via our departmental website. We also pledge to use virtual formatting of presentations to increase accessibility to departmental and class presentations.

Build partnerships with BIPOC owned organizations.

“We demand to see faculty facilitating intentional and proactive conversations with BIPOC organizations to form partnerships for the applied thesis. We demand that the department create a contact list of organizations that UNT anthropology has partnership with and would benefit from student-led research. This list should be created by the end of Fall 2020. At least 50% of the organizations on this list should be BIPOC-owned by the end of calendar year 2021.”

We agree with the need to re-examine our professional networks and make more deliberate connections with organizations centered on and led by BIPOC. Although we believe that identifying and locating research partners is part of the graduate research process, we recognize the need for faculty to showcase their professional networks and continue to provide one-on-one mentoring that facilitates introductions and connections between students and organizations. Additionally, on the department website, we will make available a list of past thesis site partnerships organized according to topic matter.

Formalize the reporting of racism and other inappropriate behavior by faculty members and students.

“We demand the creation of an actionable process for inappropriate, toxic, and racist behavior from both students and/or faculty with student oversight, as decided by students, by the closing of Fall semester 2020.”

We commit to establishing a process for the reporting of inappropriate, toxic, and racist behavior by students, faculty or staff. We will create a web portal on the departmental website for the reporting of grievances. People will be able to submit reports anonymously or provide contact information if they would like to engage in a follow-up conversation. Each report will be recorded and then discussed at faculty meetings. We seek to further clarify the role of student involvement in the process via our town halls. We will also follow the University requirement to

report any suspected acts of discrimination or harassment to the Office of Equal Opportunity. Additionally, we pledge to continue “opening” our doors to conversations with students.

Collect feedback about the student experience and satisfaction with the department and its program. Include students in the department’s strategic planning.

“We demand the department annually collect anonymous feedback from current and recently graduated students in order to allow space for feedback, starting in the 2020-2021 academic year. The data findings, findings, and planned action stemming from the result of the most recent evaluation project completed in Dr. Squires course should be shared with all current faculty, staff, and students by the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester. In the vein of participatory research, collectively strategize with students and faculty on ways to address whatever opportunities for improvement come out of the data from the most recent evaluation and subsequent annual evaluations. Trend data over time and, in the interest of transparency, make all data publicly available to current and prospective students, staff, and faculty. We demand that students be included in the department’s strategic planning process and subsequent decisions. Students who participate should be selected by students through a democratic process.”

We commit to redoubling our efforts at including student voices in our program planning and implementation. We will continue to collect anonymous feedback in an annual survey and continue to invite student participation to strategic planning meetings as we did in 2019. We will make the survey data, as well as the findings of Dr. Squires’ spring 2020 evaluation class project, public via our website. Additionally, through the town halls and involvement of a student-elected GASA representative and undergraduate Liaison position at faculty meetings, we will seek to expand the role of students in department decision making processes.