

Student Educational Requirement for Racial Justice and Equitable Futures

Summary of the [UFC Proposal](#) to the Faculty Senate (5/7/2021)

We aspire for all Cornell students to thrive and lead in a multiracial democracy, to be critical thinkers and lifelong learners in all matters that concern race, indigeneity, ethnicity, and bias. The proposed student educational requirement framework aims to achieve this goal. The framework (a) identifies a pair of learning outcomes and incentivizes their fulfillment across all degree programs with adequate support from the central administration (b) makes effective use of faculty expertise in critical research areas, and existing infrastructure in matters that concern pedagogy and technology, and (c) respects department, college and graduate field authority over requirements.

Learning Outcome 1: The Literacy Component. The student understands that structural racism, colonialism, injustice, bias, and their current manifestations have a historical and geographic basis. This requires engagement with scholarly content in the tradition of liberal arts education. A significant number of Cornell faculty have research expertise in areas that have a bearing on this outcome. Many are affiliated with one or more of these graduate fields, departments, and programs: (1) Africana Studies and Research Center (2) American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program (3) American Studies (4) Asian American Studies (5) Feminist, Gender and Sexuality Studies and (6) Latino/a Studies. Colleagues in these units represent various disciplines and are located in over twenty departments across multiple colleges. The administration must provide resources so that they can develop new curriculum and high-quality instructional materials that can be used in the courses they propose to meet the requirement, and for use by faculty and students across campus. Likewise, it must support through the colleges and departments those faculty whose research and teaching connects to Learning Outcome 1. Details on proposed courses and mechanisms by which the requirement can be rolled out for graduate students in the disciplines/professions are included in the report.

Learning Outcome 2: The Skillset Component. The student learns how to communicate and advocate across the differences that they are bound to encounter throughout their lives and careers. This requires challenging discussion and writing in the disciplines. Embedding and building on the core literacy component in the disciplines is key. The skillset component cannot supplant the literacy component. The President's July 2020 letter to the community has already inspired considerable work in this direction across departments and [colleges](#). We suggest taking these developments and other considerations into account and encouraging further engagement during the experimental roll-out years. Through all this course development built around the core scholarship of subject experts, two centrally located units will play a key role: the Center for Teaching Innovation in supporting curriculum development and inclusive pedagogical practice, and the [Intergroup Dialog Project](#) in helping prepare the Faculty and TAs for difficult and uncomfortable conversations. Above all, academic units must be supported and held accountable in these efforts by the Deans and University leadership.

Delivery Strategies: Menus must be carefully implemented, roll-out and timing taken into account, technology is critical for the infusion of the literacy content into the disciplines and across the student body, and unfair burdens must not be placed on BIPOC faculty and students. Diversity and equity course requirements often make use of menus, e.g., [CALS](#), [Arts and Sciences](#), [peer schools](#). Care must be exercised on defining criteria for getting on the menu, establishing a filtering mechanism that enforces the criteria, and a governance mechanism to maintain both aspects. Regarding technology, its use in the literacy component is for materials that include discussion centered video materials produced by expert faculty. We urge an experimental roll-out phase that is carefully monitored and evaluated, and governance mechanisms out in place for renewal of framework requirements and content on a regular basis thereafter. Finally, the delivery of the requirement is not the responsibility of our BIPOC colleagues; it is a responsibility that must be equitably shared across the entire faculty.