

THE  
**UNIVERSITY**  
OF RHODE ISLAND

ANTI-BLACK  
RACISM

An Academic Affairs Action  
Agenda for Change

2021

**WORKING TOGETHER  
TO ELIMINATE RACISM  
AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE**



## Listening. Learning. Understanding. Action. Instead of Saying Things, We Need to Do Things.

### Please Join In!

Racism is among the most persistent and pervasive problems plaguing our society. On an almost daily basis, we witness a barrage of racial injustice incidents that disrespects and endangers lives and livelihoods. Anti-Black Racism: An Academic Affairs Action Agenda for Change was born in a moment in time and history during the 2020 resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement nationally. Alarming, violent acts against Asian and Asian Americans are also occurring with increasing frequency and there is a long history of oppression of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities. An anti-Black racism agenda is vital to addressing particular and pervasive inequities.

The University also acknowledges the need to utilize an intersectional approach to address racism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, sexism, and inequities relating to all groups and community members whose rights and liberties may be at risk. As such, the URI Anti-Black Racism: An Academic Affairs Action Agenda for Change seeks to address discrimination and disrespect aimed at the Black community, which we believe will also help to address the inequities and oppression faced by Asian, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, staff, and faculty in our community. We must change our conversation and paradigm from one focused on supporting and celebrating diversity to one focused on dismantling the systems of oppression that dehumanize minoritized peoples.

As an institution, we have a responsibility to address these challenges, accelerate our efforts, and embark on new approaches and directions, including developing and advancing an anti-racism agenda pertinent to each of us individually and the University broadly. Anti-Black Racism: An Academic Affairs Action Agenda for Change is a focused action agenda designed to transform URI in meaningful and measurable ways toward meeting the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) goals of both the University-wide Academic Strategic Plan and Diversity Strategic Plan.

Please join our efforts to ensure an equal opportunity for all in our community to learn, thrive, and succeed. Our University's future will depend on what each of us is willing to do and the efforts we are willing to undertake to ensure justice and equity for all on our campus and in society. The responsibility for this challenging and essential work belongs to all of us. Thank you for being a part of this community effort.

## About Anti-Black Racism: An Academic Affairs Action Agenda for Change

The ideas expressed in Anti-Black Racism: An Academic Affairs Action Agenda for Change emerged from discussions among the Academic Affairs Diversity Task Force (AADTF) and recent dialogue with some Black faculty and staff members. The AADTF includes faculty and staff from all of the University's colleges and represents a shared governance approach to addressing DEI—and more recently, anti-Black racism—in the context of the University's academic core mission. The ideas that initially emerged were revised, affirmed, and expanded based on subsequent conversations with the AADTF, the Council of Deans, the Office of Community, Equity and Diversity (CED), the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Faculty Senate, and the University Diversity Council, along with discussion among various faculty groups and facilitated dialogues at the 13th annual Academic Summit, Anti-Racism at URI: Academic Curriculum and Pedagogy.

### Actionable Strategies Leading to Measurable Progress at URI

The Action Agenda for Change is not meant to be a prescriptive plan, but rather a living and dynamic set of actionable strategies subject to modification as new ideas emerge over time. Most importantly, the Action Agenda for Change represents an affirmation on the part of the URI academic community that black lives do matter. It is a firm commitment to embrace and allocate resources to advance an anti-Black racism action agenda and create concrete steps to improve the culture and climate on our campus, ensuring inclusive and equal learning opportunities and outcomes for all. The overriding goal for the Action Agenda for Change is to unite the URI community toward the common goal of equality and justice for all.

**“We Don't Need More Bold Statements; We Need More Bold Actions.”**



STRATEGY  
01

## Infuse Anti-Racism, Social Justice, and DEI Perspectives in the Curriculum.

- Ensure learning outcomes that reflect anti-racism, inclusiveness, equity, and social justice perspectives are included in the disciplinary curricula of all colleges.
- Strengthen the general education program to ensure all students receive meaningful education in the areas of race, racism, and injustice.
- Expand certificates and minors in social justice, equity, diversity, and anti-Black racism.
- Challenge and change the Eurocentric focus in existing curricula within majors and general education courses to reflect contributions of people of color and a range of contributions from different populations and different parts of the world.
- Consider instituting a Social Justice 101 course requirement for all students as part of general education.
- Reconsider the URI 101 course and move towards more effective and directed education focused on social justice, equity, and inclusion.
- Bring the “hidden curriculum” out of the shadows and ensure that strategies for navigating college, career readiness, and advanced education opportunities are known to all students.



STRATEGY  
02

## Expand Professional Development Focused on Anti-Black Racism and Racism Overall.

### Professional Development to Advance Anti-Racist, Inclusive, and Equitable Content

- Work collaboratively with the leadership of the Faculty Senate, AAUP, the Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (ATL), and the colleges to expand diversity, social justice, and anti-racism professional development programs aimed specifically at administrators, deans, chairs/program directors, faculty, and staff with a clear focus on both curriculum content and inclusive pedagogy in teaching and learning.
- Expand upon existing models of the URI Inclusion Workshops for Faculty, the Diversity and Inclusion Badge Program offered by the Graduate School, and/or the Social Justice & Inclusion Micro-credential offered by CED.
- Ensure ongoing efforts to enhance inclusive pedagogy training for faculty across all departments and disciplines utilizing collaborative approaches to create a community of inclusive pedagogy scholars.
- Provide support for professional development for faculty relative to equity, inclusion, social justice, and anti-Black racism in the curriculum and inclusive pedagogy.

### Professional Development to Advance an Anti-Black/Anti-Racist Inclusive Culture at URI

- Expand professional development focused on anti-Black racism.
- Infuse anti-racism and equity regularly at staff, department, and college meetings and request related progress reports on initiatives and change outcomes.
- Create an environment where people share their experiences, talk about their progress and what is working, and reflect productive relationships with others, as we move forward.
- Recognize faculty and staff excellence in diversity, equity, and social justice.
- All academic departments should regularly engage in discussions and professional development to change bias or discrimination and advance inclusiveness and equity.

STRATEGY  
03

## Transform Search and Hiring Processes. Prioritize Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention of Faculty and Staff of Color.

- Partner with CED, the Office of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity (AAEOD), and Human Resource Administration to transform search and hiring practices, including “target of opportunity” hires.
- Ensure that search processes aggressively build diverse pools and that the selection and interview processes fully recognize the qualifications and contributions of candidates of color and lead to increased diversity of our faculty.
- As part of every faculty search, seek a statement from applicants that addresses demonstrated experience in and commitment to DEI and anti-Black racism.
- Hold each other accountable to eliminate the formal or informal consideration of “academic pedigree” perspectives in candidate review processes.
- Reach out to potential candidates of color through various networks in advance of searches to diversify professional networks and urge them to consider opportunities and visit URI.
- Create and reinforce expectations and frameworks for each department to take overt steps to ensure a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for all new faculty, especially new faculty of color.
- Departments need to assess their culture, put into place anti-Black racism policies and practices, and dismantle any intentional and unintentional aspects of bias and discrimination.



STRATEGY  
04

## “Build Our Own” Diverse Graduate Programs in Selected Fields.

- “Pipeline programs” in strategically defined areas will educate a new generation of leaders and scholars of color who will become future faculty at URI and elsewhere.
- Partner with the Graduate School and degree-granting colleges to enrich the diversity of selected disciplines/fields of study that are currently lacking diversity nationally and globally by “building our own” diverse graduate programs, especially for selected programs at the Ph.D. level.
- Strategically invest graduate teaching assistant resources to ensure the viability and persistence of such pipeline programs aimed at emerging scholars of color.

STRATEGY  
05

## Develop College Plans for DEI and Appoint College Diversity Coordinators.

- Ensure that all degree granting colleges develop and implement college plans for DEI that interface with the University-wide Academic Strategic Plan and Diversity Action Plan.
- Develop plans to include a college narrative statement; a college self-assessment; college-level data on diversity; a set of goals, strategies, and action steps; as well as metrics to monitor progress.
- Appoint college diversity coordinators to work with faculty, staff, and students and implement diversity plans throughout each college. Diversity coordinators will also enhance University-wide communication and collaboration with CED regarding University-wide DEI agenda.

STRATEGY  
06

## Transform and Expand the Multicultural Faculty Fellows Program Into the Distinguished Multicultural Postdoctoral Faculty Fellows Program.

- URI will support emerging outstanding scholars from historically underrepresented groups interested in pursuing a tenure-track faculty position at URI or other higher education institutions.
- These prestigious fellowships will provide each postdoctoral fellow an opportunity to develop as a teacher-scholar, advance their existing or newly developing scholarly work, and participate in a range of personalized professional development opportunities, including intra- and extramural professional development and travel support.
- The revised program will be expanded beginning in FY '22 from one fellowship per year to at least three fellowships per year, recruited as thematic cohorts with expertise that addresses identified areas of institutional need.



STRATEGY  
07

## As an Institution Committed to DEI, Combatting Anti-Black Racism, and Advancing an Inclusive Agenda, Acknowledge and Value Evidenced-Based Faculty Contributions to Anti-Racism and DEI.

- Demonstrated teaching, research and scholarship, and service contributions that have contributed to anti-racism and/or DEI should be valued and recognized in the evaluation of candidates in the faculty search process.
- Actively explore and promote with the American Association of University Professionals, deans, and faculty, adding ways to formally value and recognize contributions made by faculty who are working toward advancing DEI and anti-racism as part of their teaching, research and scholarship, and/or service in the annual review and promotion and tenure review process

STRATEGY  
08

## Implement Annual College Diversity Progress and Accountability Reports.

- Incorporate an annual DEI progress report into college submissions as part of the annual Division of Academic Affairs Strategic Reinvestment Budget Process.
- Such reports will address diversity challenges and progress related to faculty and staff searches, students, diversity and inclusion in the curriculum, and professional development and community-building.

## Changing the Culture at URI

Premise to Achieve Culture Change: Advancing an anti-Black/anti-all racism social justice agenda is the responsibility of every URI community member.

During a breakout session at the 13th Academic Summit, faculty and staff reflecting on their own experiences and the voices of many of our students declared that culture change is essential to advancing diversity, equity, and anti-Black racism at URI. By creating an authentic inclusive and anti-Black racist lens, students and faculty of color will want to join the URI community and stay here. The result will be a campus community enriched for all. This culture change must occur in each department and college as well as in the administration. Such a shift in culture is everyone's responsibility.

Changing the culture will require each of us to own responsibility for working toward the Action Agenda for Change. We all must examine our own biases and privileges, share inclusive best practices, implement the change initiatives at all levels from systemic to interpersonal to personal, and hold each other responsible and accountable. Every department and discipline needs to reflect on their

own culture, practices, and the experience created for students and colleagues. Are we inclusive, welcoming, and creating equal opportunities for all to learn, thrive, and succeed in our community? If not, why not, and how do we fix it? Changing means calling attention to discriminatory behavior, including unconscious bias, and implementing processes and expectations that engender equity and justice.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO CHANGE CULTURE:

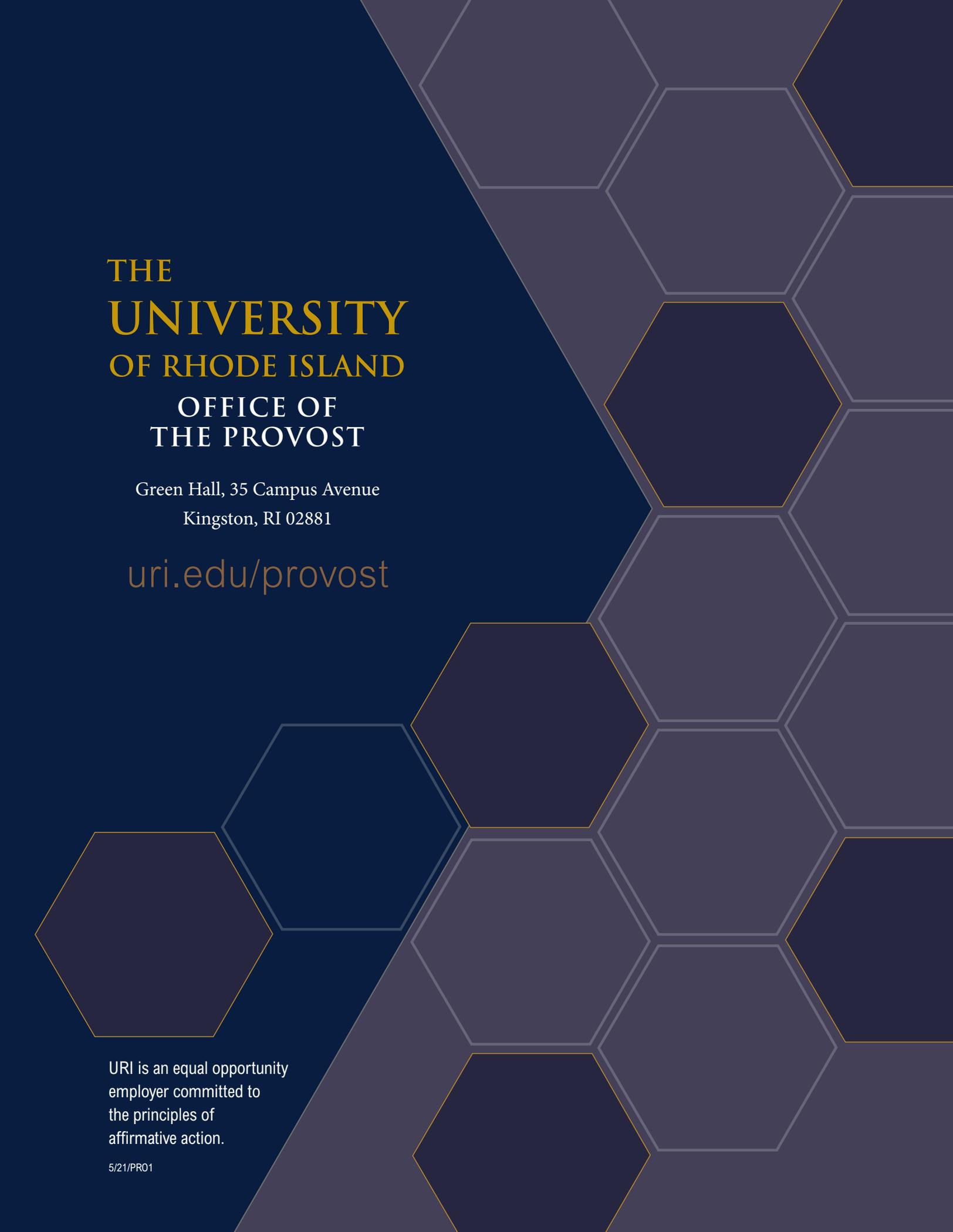
**Institutional leaders** need to focus on instituting policies, practices, and systems that advance and model culture changes at URI—including monitoring progress and the lack thereof and committing time and resources to advance these critical initiatives.

**URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement** should raise funds specifically for diversity positions, student scholarships, and initiatives supporting the Action Agenda for Change.

**Individuals** need to take personal responsibility for instilling culture change, including seeking professional development, challenging their views and departmental culture and practices, advancing curriculum for anti-Black racism, justice, equity, and inclusivity, and condemning behaviors that demonstrate racist attitudes.

This Anti-Black Racism: An Academic Affairs Action Agenda for Change represents a commitment to action that will transform URI and move us in meaningful and measurable ways toward meeting the DEI goals established in the University-wide Academic Strategic Plan and Diversity Action Plan. Embracing this agenda will allow us to move forward together—the future of our University depends on us.





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