

# CHS Ongoing Conversations

*Creating Safe Spaces for Dialogue about Race*

November 10, 2020

# College of Health Sciences Diversity, Inclusion, and Professionalism Commitment

## *In the College of Health Sciences, we commit to:*

- Interact respectfully with **all** students, faculty, and staff within the University and all others we engage with in our external physical and electronic communities and spaces.
- Uphold a culture that is welcoming and promotes the success of **all** students, faculty, and staff.
- Engage in courageous conversations and activities that empower faculty, staff, and students to stand up against injustice and discrimination.
- Work to increase the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty, students, and staff and work to advance their progression and success.
- Develop effective external relationships with community entities, with particular emphasis on underrepresented communities, to enhance diversity and inclusion both on and off campus.
- Educate our students to become leaders, scholars, and health professionals who promote health for **all** individuals and help dismantle barriers that patients and caregivers face when seeking care, contributing to the best possible quality of care for **all**.
- Promote well-being, balance, and resilience for **all** students, faculty, and staff to allow everyone to thrive through diverse tools, resources, and offerings.
- Structure our **entire** curricula to include diverse perspectives, experiences, and histories, and employ teaching strategies that promote intellectual engagement, social skills, empathy, and racial understanding, to prepare students for success in a diverse and global workplace.
- Provide the highest quality of clinical care that is responsive to the individual needs of our patients and their caregivers, with an understanding of the needs of patients within a larger sociocultural context (e.g., culture, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, socioeconomic realities).
- Increase the accessibility of our clinical care to underserved patient populations.

## What is the Goal of the Ongoing Conversations Series?

To continue to engage CHS employees and students on topics related to diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism

# From our First Conversation for Change...

**What are some characteristics of an anti-racist and equitable culture that we should have within CHS?**

- ***A culture that allows us:***
  - ***To reduce microaggressions through awareness training, dialogues, and personal reflection***
  - ***To have authentic, HOT (Honest, Open, and Trusting) conversations about race and racism***
  - ***To listen to each other and to learn about ourselves and each other with open hearts and minds***
  - ***To recognize privilege and inequities without becoming defensive***
  - ***To make mistakes, and to hold ourselves and each other accountable while fostering personal growth and forging a stronger, more inclusive and equitable community where all voices can be heard and celebrated***

# “Safe Space” as a Concept

- The term “safe spaces” originated in feminist, queer and anti-racist activities during 1960s and 1970s
- Has been a topic of debate on college campuses
- “Safe spaces” are not fixed objects and simply labeling an office/room safe does not make it so → “*safety is a relative concept*”
- Treat safe spaces as a living concept
- What does this do in regards to reconceptualizing our classrooms, our departments, colleges, and campus centers?
- safe spaces vs. brave spaces

# How Can We Create a Space that Fosters and Supports Authentic, Open Dialogue About Race?

## Creating 'Safe' Spaces...

- 3 central questions to consider as we define and construct 'safe' spaces
  - *For whom* is this space safe?
  - What is this space safe *from*?
  - What is it safe *to do* in this space?

# BREAK-OUT #1: Defining 'Safe' Space

- What is a 'safe' space?
  1. For *whom* is this space *safe*? (For *whom* would it *NOT feel safe*?)
  1. What is this space safe *from*?
  1. What is it safe *to do* in this space?

## Synopsis of Breakout #1 from discussants

### **Breakout #1: For whom is this space safe?**

- Everyone!
- People with identities that are often marginalized, in particular
- Should allow everyone to be our genuine selves, people who want to learn and grow



# Synopsis of Breakout #1 from discussants

## **Breakout #1: What is this space safe from?**

- **The space should be safe from:**
  - Microaggressions and offensive comments
  - Risk of judgement, assumptions, feeling threatened
  - Condemnation, bias, judgement, attack, stereotype, obstacles
  - Risk of having your words be weaponized
  - Risk of losing confidentiality, or violation of trust
  - Mistrust
  - Lack of respect
  - Unwillingness to be open to and trying to understand other viewpoints from your own
  - Resistance and oppositional thinking

# Synopsis of Breakout #1 from discussants

## Breakout #1: What is it safe to do in this space?

- To be yourself and share your voice and acknowledge others
- Understand the viewpoints of all individuals included, be collaborative in nature but also challenge viewpoints with the goal of broadening perspectives. This will ensure individuals viewpoints are heard and understood.
- Facilitator/instructor/identified person in the group leading the conversation may need to provide a nudge to make it safe for certain individuals to speak up
- Speak authentically, admit when you are wrong without being condemned
- Normalize the discomfort that is felt by many of us in engaging in these conversations so we recognize it as personal growth and opportunity to expand our perspectives on ourselves and others and become more self-aware and thoughtful to others
- Practice what you are learning, practice articulating thoughts and feelings about race and other challenging issues
- Make mistakes and learn from them!
- Learn about and from others who may be quite different from yourself

# What is Race Talk?

- **According to DW Sue, race talk is “a dialogue or conversation that involves topics of race, racism, “whiteness” and White privilege” that:**
  - **May trigger intense and powerful emotions**
  - **Tends to feel threatening to participants**
  - **Reveals major differences in worldviews or perspectives**
  - **Can result in solidification of racial biases**
  - **Is avoided completely or minimized by many people**

[Sue, Derald W. Race Talk and Facilitating Difficult Racial Dialogues \(Counseling Today, December 22, 2015; https://ct.counseling.org/2015/12/race-talk-and-facilitating-difficult-racial-dialogues/](https://ct.counseling.org/2015/12/race-talk-and-facilitating-difficult-racial-dialogues/)

# Conversations about Race and Racism Can Be Uncomfortable

## Difficult Conversations about Race and Racism:

- *Are potentially threatening conversations or interactions between members of different racial and ethnic groups*
- *Reveal major differences in worldviews that are challenged publicly*
- *Are found to be offensive to participants*
- *Arouse intense emotions such as dread and anxiety (for Whites) and anger and frustration (for people of color) that disrupt communication and behaviors*
- *Are often instigated by racial microaggressions*
- *Involve an unequal status relationship of power and privilege among participants*

Quoted from:

Sue, Derald W. Race Talk and Facilitating Difficult Racial Dialogues (Counseling Today, December 22, 2015; <https://ct.counseling.org/2015/12/race-talk-and-facilitating-difficult-racial-dialogues/>

# Ineffective Strategies to Facilitate Difficult Dialogues about Race

- **Five ineffective strategies:**
  - **Do nothing**
  - **Sidetrack the conversation**
  - **Appease the participants**
  - **Terminate the discussion**
  - **Become defensive**

Sue, Derald W. Race Talk and Facilitating Difficult Racial Dialogues (Counseling Today, December 22, 2015; <https://ct.counseling.org/2015/12/race-talk-and-facilitating-difficult-racial-dialogues/>)

# Successful Strategies to Facilitate Difficult Dialogues about Race

- **Five successful strategies:**
  - **Understand your racial/cultural identity**
  - **Acknowledge and be open to admitting your racial biases**
  - **Validate and facilitate discussion of feelings**
  - **Control the process, not the content, of race talk**
  - **Validate, encourage, and express admiration and appreciation to participants who speak when it feels unsafe to do so**

Sue, Derald W. Race Talk and Facilitating Difficult Racial Dialogues (Counseling Today, December 22, 2015; <https://ct.counseling.org/2015/12/race-talk-and-facilitating-difficult-racial-dialogues/>)

## BREAK-OUT #2: Establishing Our Ground Rules

- **Clark-Parson suggests starting with one nonnegotiable ground rule:**
  - **Everyone is expected “to avoid language that is pejorative or perpetuates stereotypes about gender, age, race, religious affiliation, class, sexuality, national origin, dialect or disability (not an exhaustive list)”.**
- **What other ‘ground rules’ would help us create ‘safe’ spaces for our ongoing conversations?**
- **How will we respond when people engage in effective/ineffective strategies?**

## **Our Ground Rules (Synopsis of Breakout #2)**

- **Everyone is expected “to avoid language that is pejorative or perpetuates stereotypes about gender, age, race, religious affiliation, class, sexuality, national origin, dialect or disability (not an exhaustive list)”.**
- **Introduce yourself when you enter the breakout room, to help establish rapport**
- **Leave preconceived ideas at the door**
- **Be open to other perspectives**
- **Give everyone a turn to speak without interruption**
- **Avoid raising your voice and using an aggressive tone**
- **Respect one another**
- **Give people the benefit of the doubt**
- **Listen well, encourage clarification, mirror back to check understanding**
- **Don’t be dismissive of others’ feelings**
- **Establish a protocol for when people say something that isn’t “PC” to correct them respectfully without affirming negative ideas**



# Responses to Effective vs Ineffective Strategies (Synopsis of Breakout #2)

## Responses to Effective Strategies

- Encourage and express appreciation when someone is being an effective listener or who is actively engaging on a difficult topic
- Acknowledge it, thank participants for advancing the conversation
- Point out strengths, and recognize the courage it takes to engage

## Responses to Ineffective Strategies

- If someone is sideling: Acknowledge the person's feelings, and ask why they may be hesitant to respond to that specific topic
- Take a pause or 'time out' and try to identify it as an opportunity to learn
- Silence is not an option
- Take the person aside if needed to address/identify the ineffective strategy, and encourage the person to see it as an opportunity to grow
- Facilitators can validate feelings, steer people back, help bring people back in to the conversation and return to the process by reiterating the ground rules

## Recap and Next Steps

- Safe spaces for dialogue about race are vital to our classroom, office, and lab activities
- Spaces should be safe for everyone (students and employees), judgment-free, bias-free, not subject to assumptions, or threats, trustworthy, safe for sharing, supportive; should be safe to be yourself, learn about biases and from others, and grow, speak authentically without being condemned

## Recap and Next Steps

- Race talk ground rules should allow for introductions, for everyone to speak, be respectful, non-dismissive, with negative comments given room for correction and learning, may require facilitator, focus should be on listening to the exclusion of your perspective
- Synthesize responses and use them as a set of norms for our future conversations and the settings where we gather