

English and Modern Language Departmental Mission Statement: Addendum on Accessibility and Inclusion

Rev. 12/1/21

This is what we believe:

We believe that Black lives matter.

We believe that higher education, particularly public higher education, should be broadly accessible for students of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, immigration / citizen status, genders, sexualities, socio-economic backgrounds, and abilities.

We believe that English departments are shaped by cultures of racism and legacies of imperialism.

We believe that working against racism requires active, critical encounters with those cultures and legacies.

We believe that our classrooms are important sites for such encounters.

We believe that our faculty should reflect the diversity of our academic community

We believe data that demonstrates that student success works in conversation with the opportunity to imagine themselves in roles of educational authority.

We believe that ableism and assumptions of neurotypicality affect education's expectations and that these expectations should be actively countered.

This is where we are:

In the Spring of 2022, we will be an all-white department.

Our courses offering students the chance to center the words of the people of color are silo-ed in our curriculum.

We are invested in beginning the process of building a more anti-racist culture.

We have begun work on centering accessibility and inclusion in our classrooms.

These are the gaps we acknowledge:

We acknowledge a lack of faculty that reflect the diverse make-up of our student population

We acknowledge a lack of faculty with scholarly expertise in centering voices of color

We acknowledge insufficient coursework centering voices of color

We acknowledge a need to create curriculum that centers different abilities and neurodiversity.

We acknowledge a need for formal faculty process materials.

This is what we plan to pursue moving forward:

For students:

- An active voice in shaping the department, particularly in terms of its work to be inclusive and accessible
- An active role in the hiring process
- Departmental value placed on the whole self

For faculty:

- Support in developing anti-racist and anti-ableist pedagogies and programming

- Prioritization of a TT faculty hire in literature(s) by people of color.
- Prioritization of a TT faculty hire in creative writing (poetry) with a secondary specialization in literature(s) by people of color.
- Commitment to support a cluster-hiring process to expand opportunities and support for faculty of color throughout campus.
- Commitment to protecting our new hires, particularly our new hires of color, from the disproportionate burden of service that falls on faculty of color by recommending that all our assistant professors complete:
 - No service in the 1st year
 - Service on one departmental committee in the 2nd year
 - Service on one department committee/college committee in 3rd yr
- We will work to establish mentorship relationships between our faculty of color and established faculty of color at our sister institutions when appropriate mentors of color are not available at UIS.
- We will compensate mentors of color for their labor
- We will have formal policies and models available for mentoring, performance reviews, and personnel processes.
- We will be ambassadors on campus for our faculty of color and for anti-racism more generally.
- We will support the development of curriculum that centers race, racism, different abilities, and neurodiversity.