

## Assessing Your School's Willingness to Have Explicit Conversations about Whiteness

### Questions to Consider

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1. How serious would you say your school is in addressing issues of “diversity and inclusion”?

- Not really serious       Intermittently serious       Serious

Give specific example examples that explain your answer:

2. Where is your school in the process of addressing issues of “diversity and inclusion”? (Check all that apply.)

- Has no plan
- Has several uncoordinated plans, goals and activities
- Has an overall plan
- Has a strategic diversity plan—short-term and long-term—that includes serious accountability
- Has a strategic diversity plan that includes serious accountability AND is tied to the institution's business plan
- Is fulfilling the plan
- Ongoing evaluation and revisions of the plan are taking place

3. Where does the organization talk about “differences” and how? (Check all that apply.)

- In public relations materials
- In the president's speeches
- In many departments as part of their regular business, identifying courses to teach and who will teach them, recruiting, hiring, tenure and promotion, etc.
- In classrooms connected to subjects such as ethnic studies
- In classrooms, not connected to ethnic studies such as history, English, biology, pre –med

- In student government
  - In conversations about policies and procedures
  - Other
4. Are white people in the institution explicitly talked about as a group? If so, by whom and in what situations? (Check all that apply.)
- A few people of color who are seen as renegades
  - A few white people who are seen as renegades as well
  - Students in ethnic student unions
  - Student government
  - Office of Student Life
  - The provost
  - Donors and alumnae/i
  - Other
5. Where is “white” or “whiteness” explicitly talked about and how? (Check all that apply.)
- No where publically
  - In ethnic studies or sociology classes
  - In other, less content-specific classes
  - By “progressives” on campus
  - In the student newspaper as backlash to others’ comments
  - In the Office of Student Life
  - In the Admission office
  - Other places

6. Is there a history of trying to open conversations where white people were identified explicitly just as people in other racial groups were? If so, in what sort of setting and with whom?

a. Who brings it up? People with skin-color privilege? People with positional privilege?

b. When “race” is talked about, whose race is it?

c. What happens in the room?

7. Remind yourself of two scenarios where you have heard or heard about whiteness being brought up at your school. In the conversations, who was silent and who was not?

8. When students of color are talked about as homogeneous groups, does the conversation generally focus on negative aspects or positive ones? Does it vary by racial group, e.g., Asian vs. Latino? How do institutional leaders talk about them in public or do they? How do campus police officers talk about them in casual conversations? Who is/are the brunt of campus humor?

A reminder: “How we set up the terms for discussing racial issues shapes our perceptions and response to these issues.”

Cornell West, *New York Times*, August 2, 1992.

9. What does *not* talking about race or the reality of the domination of whiteness reveal about your school?

10. If you were to do a cost-benefit analysis of beginning to name white people explicitly, what would it look like?

Costs for you individually	Costs for the academic community	Benefits for you individually	Benefits for the community

11. If you had to set it up now, how would you get people to focus on the common and shared good while talking explicitly about whiteness, and potentially move to a more forward-moving conversation?