

Mount Mary University – Department of English

## **Statement on Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Belonging**

Members of the Department of English at Mount Mary University believe we can work together to combat systemic and individual racism and create a welcoming environment for all by actively and mindfully practicing the 4 Cs central to our Mount Mary University Mission – **C**ompassion, **C**ommunity, **C**ommitment, and **C**ompetence.

We recognize that English as a discipline has often excluded forms of language. For example, Black English (African American Vernacular English), regional “non-standard” varieties of English, and global Englishes have been criticized and erased. By historically dismissing the value of English language varieties spoken in many communities of color, English studies has marginalized—pushed aside—the intellectual, artistic, and creative work of these communities in classrooms – including the work of students.

Given the historical omissions of Black, Indigenous, and people of color from the canon (those texts we consider “classics”) of English studies, and the current tensions in our Milwaukee community and nationally, we stand as a department to affirm that Black Lives Matter. We commit to doing better by all Black, Indigenous, and students of color (BIPOC) by using anti-racist teaching and practices that work against such shameful histories.

While the field of English studies and those in our department have made positive changes to address our historical failings, we still have much work to do in reforming curricula and policies to create a learning environment that supports, values, and welcomes all students.

Therefore, we strive – as an institution and a department – toward enacting moral values and ideals stated in our University’s Mission and in our Departmental objectives.

### **WE PLEDGE THE FOLLOWING . . .**

1. To practice compassion for students whose voices have too often been historically marginalized or diminished within English Studies.
2. To forge English Department community that supports and celebrates students, faculty and staff of all races, religions, national identities, gender and sexual identities, socioeconomic classes, family statuses, linguistic heritages, and students of all abilities.
3. To exercise commitment to anti-racism and to actively work against other forms of exclusion, bigotry, and dehumanization.
4. To develop competence as anti-racist educators and community members.

Members of the English Department will **practice COMPASSION** for students whose voices have too often been historically marginalized or diminished within English Studies by:

- Committing ourselves to working to promote anti-racism and foster inclusion not only because we recognize that our diversity fuels excellence and innovation, but because it is integral to the pursuit of social justice and central to the Mission of our University.
  - Advocating for Black, Indigenous and people of color hires in the department and across MMU, understanding that our students deserve racial representation in our faculty, staff, and administrative bodies.
  - Expanding our course offerings so that diverse voices, perspectives, artistic contributions, and scholarship are represented and valued so that all students see themselves in our courses and come to see diversity as the resource, strength, and benefit that it is.
  - Advancing equity-minded measures that create a welcoming environment, foster a sense of belonging, and propel our students to achieve success at Mount Mary University and beyond.
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Members of the English Department will **forge COMMUNITY** that that supports and celebrates students, faculty and staff of all races, religions, national identities, gender and sexual identities, socioeconomic classes, family statuses, linguistic heritages, and students of all abilities by:

- Building structures of support and mentoring for Black, Indigenous, and other students, faculty, and staff of color.
  - Collaborate with campus and community academic and cultural centers to promote increased academic and community connections.
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Members of the English Department will **exercise our COMMITMENT** to work against racism and other forms of exclusion, bigotry, and dehumanization by:

- Advocating for resources addressing the protection, safety, and well-being of all of our diverse department and campus members.
- Demonstrating a willingness to engage in difficult conversations and disagreement to promote growth and assessment of our assumptions and values.

- Offering structured opportunities inside and outside of our English classrooms where students, faculty, and staff explore what it means to practice patience, empathy, and the courage to embark on such dialogues and take such risks.
  - Making time for celebrating our successes and assessing where we have room for growth.
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Members of the English Department will **develop COMPETENCE** as anti-racist educators and community members by:

- Advancing anti-racist pedagogies addressing the following: equity and access; linguistic diversity; structures of power embedded in literary canon, histories of empire and colonization; racial injustice; and the powerful role of language in fostering belonging.
  - Facilitating additional educational workshops for students, faculty, and staff to develop and deepen cultural competencies.
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We believe these and other anti-racist and inclusive actions are a shared responsibility across disciplinary areas for all students, faculty, and staff. Hate has no home at MMU or in our department. We stand against racism, exclusion, bigotry, and dehumanization in any form.

Across our many English courses and programs, we are committed to empowering students as readers, writers, critical thinkers, educators, and agents whose words can create a more just and equitable world.

*This statement was drafted by current English department faculty, workshopped and revised with English department members and students. We commit ourselves to returning to, re-evaluating, and recommitting to these actions each year.*

*Please continue to send us feedback! We understand that this work is an on-going process.*