

Clinical Psychology Program: Antiracist Guiding Principles and Actions

Following the unjust killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and many other Black women and men and the protests led by Black Lives Matter, in 2020 we formed a taskforce committed to dismantling institutional and systemic racism in the NIU Clinical Program and in the structures in which the program is embedded. Through these actions, we strive to support the ongoing identification and eradication of racist ideas and practices within clinical psychology and academia, recognizing the impacts of these actions on society at large.

Guiding Principles

The Clinical Psychology Training Program is embedded within a society and larger culture that includes values, beliefs, biases and practices that routinely advantage some individuals and disadvantage others. Members of the Program, individually and collectively, explicitly disavow discriminatory treatment of people on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, religion, levels of abilities/disabilities, and other factors that are often prejudged by the larger culture.

Individual members of our Program community are not immune to the effects of these pernicious influences of the larger culture. We are, of course, imperfect. We sometimes act in ways that are contrary to our professed values of equal treatment, respecting all people, and fostering a diverse and multicultural community. Although we at times do or say things that are hurtful (e.g., sexist or racist), we are also committed to grow, change and improve. We invite feedback, and we strive to support, protect and applaud those who give voice to concerns related to bias, especially bias that is reinforced by institutional power. We engage in reflection and discussion. We recognize that sometimes the most impactful experiences are marked by missteps that can leave one feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed. We strive to be better and support each other's growth. We also strive to hold each other and ourselves accountable in ways that facilitate understanding and forgiveness, and disavow actions that lead to division, shame and/or silence.

The Program has similar expectations for all members of our community. We do not expect perfection from ourselves or from others. We do expect that each of us listens to other members of the Program community, other colleagues, our clients, and members of the larger community; treat each other with respect; act in ways that build trust; honor the trust placed in us; and allow for perspectives that are different from our own. We seek to reengage and repair relationships; and grow. We believe that openness to feedback, earnest reflection and honest and open relationships within our program and with the larger community will promote our personal and professional development.

Antiracist Action

The program strives to have students in the clinical psychology program learn to have a broad understanding of the multifaceted nature of diversity. This includes opportunities to learn to identify one's own conscious and unconscious biases, coupled with ongoing experiential

activities intended to broaden students' knowledge of diverse groups and learn to self-challenge biases. Additionally, the program attempts to integrate diversity and cultural sensitivity throughout student coursework to support continued learning. On clinical supervision teams, students are encouraged to take a stance of cultural humility in considering their clients' experiences and to strive toward respectful, open-minded collaboration with clients. Students are taught to consider the damaging effects of a historical lack of diverse representation in the field of psychology and work to combat these effects by considering the fit of a treatment to an individual client based on their unique characteristics whenever possible. In research, students are taught to mindfully consider sample composition, and how the racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, religious and other identities of participants may affect study findings in addition to how the researcher's conscious and unconscious biases impact research. In this way, the program is committed to preparing psychologists to serve diverse populations in a variety of roles. In the context of our country's history of systemic oppression, the program aims to think critically about the ways in which we teach students about diversity. Faculty and students work collaboratively to identify areas for improvement in our handling of diversity and diversity-related topics. Further, faculty members are committed to creating spaces where open conversations can occur related to these issues and mentoring students of all backgrounds towards meeting their professional goals. Faculty within the program actively work to refine mentoring styles, teaching, clinical supervision, and research to be anti-racist and uplift diversity rather than suppress it.

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