

Decentering the Frame: expanded ways of knowing
CTL Fellowship
School of Art; Photography Department
Year: 2021

Fellow: Tori Purcell

FINAL REPORT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION & INITIAL GOALS:

The project aimed to lead faculty towards building an antiracist curriculum by fostering inclusive classroom communities. The project focused on both reimagining course content and diversifying modes of delivery of that content as a means of breaking down structural inequalities in the classroom as they pertain to race, class, gender, sexuality and other ways of being. The project aimed to engage the department as a whole - faculty, staff, students, and administration - in collective conversations and sharing of ideas and experiences in order to cultivate a shared commitment and a variety of strategies to enhance learning and understanding.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS (JANUARY-DECEMBER)

I. Faculty Engagement

- A. Seven Faculty Learning Communities were established
 1. Photo BFA Freshman Year Courses (Group A)
 2. Photo BFA Freshman Year Courses (Group B)
 3. Photo BFA Sophomore Year Courses
 4. Photo BFA Junior Year Courses
 5. Photo BFA Senior Year Courses
 6. Photo MFA Experience
 7. Assessment in the Classroom
- B. Each of the FLCs met once in Fall 2020, and twice in Spring 2021
- C. Each FLC had 4-5 faculty members; all Photo Faculty voluntarily participated.
- D. The goal of the FLCs: to create a space where faculty can share teaching resources and ideas including, texts, assignments, ice breakers, critique strategies, strategies for how to best facilitate potentially uncomfortable or unfamiliar topics in class discussion, etc. Faculty were asked to re-examine their own syllabi and modes of delivery in an effort to reimagine course content away from dominant histories and implicit biases.
- E. Closing the Loop
 1. In May, 2021 we had a half-day Curriculum Intensive/Retreat. The final section of this meeting was dedicated to faculty sharing anecdotes regarding inclusive pedagogy and establishing classroom norms - individual faculty shared with the faculty at large things they had learned over the course of this year; strategies they had tried that worked well in the classroom; strategies that failed; conversations and questions that had come up in the FLCs, etc.

II. Student Engagement

- A. Student Forum hosted by the student organization, The Photo League -
Tori held an open forum with Photo undergraduate students to tell them about the fellowship, its goals, solicit participation from students who are interested in getting involved, and to answer student questions. The forum happened on 2/18 at 8pm.
- B. An anonymous student survey was distributed electronically asking for student feedback. The survey aimed to measure based on student experience, whether students feel the Photography curriculum and classroom environments are inclusive and deliver anti-racist content. The survey was distributed in March 2021.
- C. In April 2021, Tori began one-on-one and small group (5 people or less) meetings with students who had volunteered to participate. The meetings were structured as interviews where Tori asked 5 open questions and then listened to student responses. The questions asked were the following:
 - 1) How do you define an inclusive learning environment? What are the ingredients?
 - 2) What qualities do you value most in a teacher?
 - 3) What qualities do you value most in yourself as a student?
 - 4) How can we create a better sense of community in the Photo Department?
 - 5) Do you have any anecdotes or suggestions that you would like to share?

III. Programmatic Changes

- A. BFA Program Change
The Photography Department Curriculum Committee proposed a BFA program change, which includes the addition of a new required seminar course focusing on the ethics of representation within media and specifically photography. The proposed new course and program change will be submitted to the School of Art Curriculum Committee in Spring 2022.
- B. Common Reading Experience
The Photography Department implemented a common reading experience across all 4 years of the BFA. The common reading experience consists of one reading assignment per semester (8 common readings total for the 4-year program) to serve as transformational readings to facilitate course content. In the selection of the common readings, the department can have the larger goal of antiracist pedagogy in mind and be more inclusive of non-white and non-western perspectives.
- C. Assessment
An FLC focusing on *Assessment in the Classroom* and a sub-committee focusing on Program Assessment were formed. Both bodies looked at more inclusive and less biased assessment strategies. Student self-assessment was a point of focus.

SUMMARY OF DATA

I. Student Survey - gaining student perspective on inclusive classroom and antiracist pedagogy

- A. Participation
 - 1) Survey went to 106 students. 28 students responded.

- 2) 18% freshman; 32% sophomore; 32% junior; 18% senior
- 3) 8/28 students were willing to participate in a follow up interview with Tori Purcell (fellow)

B. Key Findings

- 1) 64% of students feel their overall classroom experience has been inclusive.
- 2) 71% of students feel that teachers welcome the expression of diverse perspectives, opinions, interests, lifestyles, etc.
- 3) 75% of students feel that teachers show a broad range of artists in the classroom. (broad in terms of gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, nationality, age, photographic genre/style)

II. Exit Survey - Anonymous survey sent to all graduating seniors. Survey asked questions pertaining to curriculum, facilities, community, and inclusivity. (See Attached Data spreadsheet)

A. Participation

- 1) Survey went to 19 students. 4 students responded.

B. Key Findings

- 1) 75% of students are likely to recommend the Photography Program to others.
- 2) 50% of students feel the Photography Dept. fosters a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment. 50% of students feel it does not.
- 3) 100% of students said they felt valued as an individual in the classroom.

III. Faculty Participation

A. Curriculum Intensive, May 4, 2021

- 1) 23/25 department faculty who teach in BFA Program were present

B. FLCs

- 1) 24 faculty members participated

IV. Student Interviews

A. Participation

- 1) 5 students were interviewed.
- 2) 1 graduating senior; 4 juniors

GAUGING SUCCESS - TAKE AWAYS

- A. We had nearly 100% faculty participation in various aspects of the fellowship research. All participation was voluntary. Over 26% of undergraduate students were involved in various aspects of the fellowship research. This high-level of participation by faculty, staff, and students demonstrates an overall commitment and value in creating inclusive classrooms and antiracist curriculum.
- B. The fellowship achieved its primary goal of engaging the department as a whole - faculty, staff, students, and administration - in collective conversations to cultivate a shared commitment to inclusive pedagogy and a variety of strategies to enhance learning and understanding.
- C. The fellowship involved building a culture - expanding a way of thinking and understanding through productive dialogue, and therefore, with goals such as these there are fewer tangible deliverables that can be produced and easily quantified. However, the larger goal of developing a culture of open discussion around pedagogy has been met and hopefully the conversations will flow easier and continue in the future.

