

Phillips Exeter Academy English Department Anti-Racism Statement

September 2020

The Exeter English department acknowledges the harms expressed most recently in the @Exeter Instagram posts. Structures of racism and inequity have affected both policies and practices, and past calls for change have not led to sufficient results. The department is committed to full participation in our overdue national and institutional reckoning on race and equity by listening to the ideas and stories of faculty and students present and past to develop a targeted agenda for addressing harmful structures and habits in the year ahead. Our efforts will aim not only for immediate progress, but also for the sustained and constant work necessary to fulfill our institutional commitment to becoming an anti-racist school and our departmental goal of creating classroom communities in which BIPOC/Queer students feel welcomed, included, safe and celebrated.

Our response to the Black@Exeter posts and other recent calls for greater commitment to anti-racist work have included these initial steps this summer:

- Reading of Black@, Queer@, Asian@ Exeter posts by all department members and opening discussions with particular attention to the Black@Exeter posts.
- Full-department participation in a September 2 discussion of the Black@Exeter posts and systemic anti-blackness. This discussion was facilitated by Dr. Aretina Hamilton, Associate Director of Equity and Inclusion at Interlochen Arts Academy, who will continue to work with the department as an independent outside expert and facilitator.
- Participation by over half the department in summer anti-racist education and professional development.
- Adoption of a departmental policy eliminating the N-Word from class discussion.

Our ongoing efforts will include, at a minimum, the following:

- An open forum series beginning in fall term to hear student ideas, stories, and feedback.
- An invitation for collaboration with student and faculty affinity groups.
- Ongoing professional development for all department members with the goal of cultural competency and elimination of classroom practices or habits that center whiteness and marginalize any students or student groups. Progress towards these goals will become part of the review process.
- Examination of our hiring and retention practices to increase the number of BIPOC faculty in the department.
- More deliberate departmental discussion and sharing of pedagogical and curricular practices that will foster a trusting and equitable environment in our classes.

This statement was developed by the Phillips Exeter Academy English Department faculty in the summer of 2020 to help guide the department's ongoing anti-racism work.