

Racism, privilege, and equal access and your voice

ALVSCE_Bulletin <alvsce_bulletin-bounces@list.cals.arizona.edu>

on behalf of

Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension Weekly Bulletin

<alvsce_bulletin@list.cals.arizona.edu>

Mon 6/8/2020 9:47 AM

To: alvsce_bulletin@list.cals.arizona.edu <alvsce_bulletin@list.cals.arizona.edu>

 1 attachments (536 bytes)

ATT00001.txt;

Colleagues,

I have heard directly and indirectly that some employees in *our* college consider discourse on the issues of racism, privilege, and equal access to be "political" and so against ABOR and UA policy to discuss in the workplace. Of course, these issues have political aspects, but other aspects are also directly relevant to our ability to fulfill our three mission areas. These are issues that can and should be handled directly and appropriately at work.

I want to provide some broad background and guidance today so that you need not be afraid when confronting racism at work simply because some aspects of this issue are political. I hope none of this is new to any employee, but I worry it may be and, if so, please discuss it with your unit head immediately.

Societal issues that are so pervasive in our lives they affect how we fulfill our work commitments are, by definition, relevant to doing our jobs. In the last two weeks, especially, many of us have had days when concentrating on normal work feels pointless. Grief, rage, heartbreak, guilt, and many other feelings have overwhelmed some of us. We have felt powerless. But for years, I have seen you acting on these issues at work to make the positive impacts you can. There is no need to be afraid to continue taking these actions now. You may feel that you do not have the all the knowledge and skills you would like to have, neither do I--we can learn together.

It is inconsistent with our Land-Grant University not to recognize and remove systemic racism, privilege, inequity and unequal access to higher education. By choosing to work in a Land-Grant University, we implicitly committed to working to achieve the purposes of both of the Morrill Acts (of 1862 and of 1890). As the founding college of Arizona's Land-Grant University and the home of Arizona's Cooperative Extension System, we have had the longest obligation to do so. Especially our faculty can and should discuss with students and their colleagues such pervasive and ubiquitous issues as racism and privilege as they affect equal access to higher education and the opportunity it creates.

Most of our CALS and CES faculty together attained a Doctorate in *Philosophy*. The etymology of the word "philosophy" in the context of "PhD" is from the Greek word *philosophia* which means "love of knowledge, pursuit of wisdom, and systematic investigation." Only a part of attaining a PhD is discipline-area expertise, and inherent in our PhD studies should be understanding commitment and obligation to continue the "love of knowledge, pursuit of wisdom, and systematic investigation" to the next generation. We do not fulfill this obligation by arbitrarily or capriciously limiting knowledge, wisdom and systematic investigation by gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, religion, no religion, or any one of the great number of irrelevant aspects or attributes that have been used for tribalism and suppression by human beings, and this most certainly includes a person's skin color.

Our society has also conferred on our faculty the special privilege of academic freedom and as we directly address the issues in, of and around racism against, and equality for, African Americans we must do so appropriately. This means we must do so in the context of our academic expertise. It does not mean we may use our positions and/or resources to influence elected political outcomes, or to indoctrinate anyone with our personal political views, or to drive and promote our personal agendas.

Regards,
Shane

Shane C. Burgess

Vice President for Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension
Charles-Sander Dean of the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Forbes Building, Room 306 | 1140 E. South Campus Drive
P.O. Box 210036 | Tucson, AZ 85721-0036
Office: 520-621-7621
sburgess@cals.arizona.edu
alvsce.arizona.edu
cals.arizona.edu
[twitter](#)

The University of Arizona is located statewide on the ancestral homelands of indigenous peoples.