

October 27, 2023 | ARTF Meeting

Attendees: Lorette Oden, Carl Ervin, Katy Valentin, LeRon Williams, Jeff Hamer, Alisha Looney, Andrea Henderson, Fiifi Godwyll
Zoom attendees: Guest Speaker Dr. Pamela Peters

Agenda:

- A. Guest Speaker - Dr. Pam Peters, WIU Asst. Prof., Broadcasting & Journalism. Prior to WIU she worked at Lane College, an HBCU, which is located in Tennessee
- B. Blatant Racism in the Macomb community
 - a. We spoke about the disgusting video about the store owner calling students the n-word
 - b. ARTF Public Statement To This Act of Racism

A) Guest Speaker

60-70% of our students are first-gen, with our students being from a city like the Chicago area they are now moving to a more rural area

They feel uncomfortable dealing with certain people

They can feel like the police are tailing them

Students would need rides to Walmart due to no car, each time the speaker would give a ride to a black student they would see a cop waiting to start tailing them as soon as they left campus.

Other than the blatant problems these students face as they come into the school, another question is How can we adjust as a campus when we

These students also have to deal with racism in online spaces, though it may not be in the community, it still plays a part into what they are experiencing so "It seems to also play a role into how those experiences could affect them in how they see other offline as well"

Dr Oden asked a question on what are some things the HBCU would do to curb some issues

They would bring in/work with the mayor, they would host events open to students and open to the community. The media would portray any incident that would happen near the university, even if it didn't involve students, they would say it happened on the university campus. So they started working directly with the media, which helped tremendously stop unnecessary spread.

We started with our FYE and Summer Bridge Program, we would do events out in the community so the students would be seen

Question from both sides: How do we improve both sides, the community and the students?

In terms of the community, Tennessee is a very contentious state, they are still arguing over whether the confederate statue should have come down. The answer is not easy, and it's a question we ask ourselves daily. We may never find a true answer, but the main approach is to get our students out into the community. Another thing we did is focusing on who we are partnering with. If they don't want to come to our area, we partner with some of the richer communities so we are out there even more. We also partnered with churches (using our chapel choir) (we would also have students just come out and sit in services.

In terms of students, they may not know what the etiquette is to be a student, so we had certain faculty and staff on campus that would mentor students (sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't) But as the students moved through, these faculty became known as safe spaces for students to go to and feel like "I've got somebody here that I can share my experiences with." I was told by so many students that they spent the first couple weeks and months that they would go to class, go get their meal then spend the rest of their day in their dorm because they didn't know what else to do. This doesn't solve everything, but it allows the FY students to know where they can go, what they can do, and who they can get help from. We see a lot of this subside

– This is great stuff, but it also seems like it isn't. Does the university actively encourage this? – what does the university do for you to keep you mentally healthy –

I'll put it this way, Leadership matters. The Administration said "Do what you need to do and we will partner with you where you need us." But we had the ability to go to the President individually and say "I want to try this" and we were given the go ahead. Another thing is if these types of ideas don't come from the faculty they may feel like it is being pushed onto them. For true ownership to happen these ideas honestly should be generated from faculty.

Having an urge to try things and support things is important, but the issue is keeping it going (if that person leaves then what is next?) Another challenge is funding, but we still see a lot of these programs are still around today. Trying to change social issues takes a lot of time and mental health. One of the things our University offered was that if the Faculty had to go see a counselor they got around 15 or 20 free sessions even when we only had 1 or 2 counselors. Just chatting to decompress can help a lot. So, it is a lot of stress to provide mentoring, so it is up to the university to make counseling as available as possible to students, faculty, and staff.

What are some of the interventions to get the students into the community?

We would have the students go through an interview process then go volunteer at a daycare. We also saw the African American student community do a food festival and though it was small at first, we saw it growing over time. Then we would go out and bring the media to our events, whether it was student media or local media. We have a partnership with some elementary and high school art programs. (both predominantly white and black schools) Some of these ideas came from the President's office, some of it came from FYE, others came from individual faculty and staff. So we started realizing that starting young could encourage

What is your enrollment?

When I started it was 1500, after covid 700-800, the university struggles with retention like a lot of other students. Between 17-19' we went from a retention of 19% to 40%+, by implementing mental health programs. We had larger gathering times with students and counselors, but it would also be an open time to do peer-to-peer counseling by the students just talking to one another. As well as some other programs, these programs were brought to the school by Dr. Deborah Rogers, currently the director of Identity Diversity Equity and Accessibility with the Carnegie Library

B) Racism in the Macomb Community

B1) We spoke about the disgusting video about the store owner calling students the n-word and screaming at them to get out of their store.

- Historically when the police were working with the owner and has been hard to work with.
- The owner was rowdy with the police after they were called to the scene by the students.
- The owner was cited with resisting and interfering. The Mayor and the President may be coming up with

B2) ARTF Public Statement To This Act of Racism

The Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) is aware of a racially-charged incident that occurred with a Macomb business owner. The ARTF stands with the WIU President and the Mayor of the city of Macomb in condemning racism, specifically the actions of the business owner. The safety and security of the Macomb and university community are of utmost priority.

If you experience incidents of racial discrimination and harassment, report it to: Macomb Police Department (309) 833-4505; WIU Office of Public Safety (309) 298-1949; McDonough County Branch of the NAACP (309) 255-3469; or Office of Justice, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (JIDE) (309) 298-5179.

If you are experiencing emotional or mental effects as a result of incidents of racial discrimination, you may contact the University Counseling Center at (309) 298-2453. If you have any questions please feel to reach out to the co-chairs of the ARTF LS-Oden@wiu.edu or CW-Ervin@wiu.edu

- College Chapter of the NAACP meeting - MCC Multipurpose Room 5-7 PM tonight
- President Huang and the Mayor's address was good, but the ARTF plans to be more specific and provide more specific calls to action for students.