

College of Liberal Arts, Ad Hoc Research Committee, Racial Justice Subcommittee Mission Statement

The persistent and pervasive nature of racial violence in American society, as evidenced most recently by the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, requires that universities and university faculty members reflect on our roles in the perpetuation of racial oppression and thus become agents of change. Regardless of the specific nature of the research that we, as faculty and graduate students, may undertake, the deep structural logic of American racism shapes our work and our capacity to undertake it.

The College of Liberal Arts recently created an ad hoc committee on research to address the challenges of developing and undertaking research in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As members of this committee, we believe that it is imperative that our approach to these challenges be investigated through a commitment to racial justice, consistent with the agenda of Black Lives Matter. We hope to build broad support in the College and across the University for an initiative that engages faculty, staff and students in a commitment to racial justice research:

- The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) should make a strong commitment to research in support of racial justice, including commitment of resources to support such research. This should include support for the recruitment of faculty and graduate students of color, particularly Black faculty and Black students. This also involves providing support for existing academic units on campus that have centrally engaged with racial justice research and programming.
- UTEP should undertake an inventory of existing projects in the College of Liberal Arts (and in other colleges) that support racial justice and designate resources to enhance that research and to build connections among faculty and student racial justice researchers. This should involve enhancement of existing PhD programs and the possible introduction of new PhD programs dedicated to racial justice research.
- A strong program of racial justice research requires emphasis on the intersection of diverse fields of research and creative endeavors, notably those directed at gender, race, criminal justice reform, nationality, education and health disparities, class, sexuality and migration to list a few.
- UTEP should promote and support research projects in critical areas that address racial injustice. The history and nature of policing, as experienced by people of color, police violence and incarceration in the Border Region represent priority focus areas.
- In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond the pandemic, UTEP should explore how the development of a racial justice research initiative could provide research opportunities for faculty and graduate students who currently face severe challenges. A strong racial justice research program would contribute to the emergence of UTEP as a leader in such research and become a focal point for the recruitment and retention of new faculty and graduate students, particularly Black faculty and Black students. Identification of funding to support graduate students of color engaged in such work should have a high priority.