



## **Our commitment to Black Lives Matter: addendum**

Over the past two years, College of the Atlantic has taken important steps to address structural racism at the college. This work is still in its very early stages and that's one reason why we've not talked about it much off-campus. The participatory, bottom-up nature of much of this work makes it difficult to summarize succinctly; and the work we've done so far is a drop in the bucket of the work we must do.

- In 2018 the president convened the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) working group. Led by faculty member Dave Feldman, this group of students, faculty, and staff has held several ACM dialogues, visioning sessions, and other events on campus to discuss aspects of diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racism, and de-colonization. The group is currently leading a reading of “So you Want to Talk About Race?” by Ijeoma Oluo.
- Also in 2018, we convened the Student Persistence working group. This group, led by faculty members Bonnie Tai and Kourtney Collum, researched and designed a pilot program to improve the persistence of COA students, particularly those who self-identify as traditionally underrepresented on college campuses, such as: first-generation college students, students of color, and students with high financial need. The program designed by this group, COA<sup>2</sup>, described below, was launched in 2019.
- In 2019, 27 community members (12 students, four administrators, seven faculty, two staff, and one trustee)—President Collins included—participated in a two-day training on historical and structural racism by the Racial Equity Institute (REI). This was funded from several grants, the college's operating budget, and my discretionary presidential fund. On June 6, 15 students and nine faculty/staff participated in a 2.5 hour online training program run by REI.
- Working with Sarah Luke, our Dean of Student Life, Dave Feldman and alumna Emily Postman '11, we developed a three-hour DEI orientation workshop as part of our new-student orientation, piloted in Fall 2019. This workshop included a session led by a trainer from REI as well as a small panel of alumnx.
- In 2019 these efforts expanded further with the convening of the DEI strategic planning task force, with the goal of having a community-led, participatory process to develop an action plan to address DEI issues on campus. This group is co-coordinated by staff member Heather Albert-Knopp '99 and faculty members Dave Feldman and Bonnie Tai, working with students, faculty, and staff.



- The strategic planning task force hired Dr. Liza Cariaga-Lo to facilitate the information gathering and planning process. During the winter Liza held a series of focus groups and listening sessions with COA students, faculty, and staff, and submitted a summary of findings from those sessions. At the end of the winter term, Liza was working with the group to develop a survey instrument to complete the data-gathering phase of their work, but the pandemic required her to step away from the work for a time.
- The task force also engaged with Dr. Lynn Hernández to conduct workshops and training for faculty and staff on topics of implicit bias and understanding microaggressions, and to offer one-on-one coaching for faculty on these and other DEI-related topics. These sessions will be held before the end of 2020, and will continue into the future.
- In 2019, the president appointed faculty member Bonnie Tai as Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching. Together with faculty colleagues, students, and staff, Bonnie has developed the College Opportunity and Access (COA<sup>2</sup>) program, which aims to build a supportive, educational, and communal advocacy space designed for students who self-identify with the experiences of minoritized, first generation, and/or low income college students.
- Since 2017, the Faculty Diversity Working Group has been working to develop processes and protocols for recruiting and supporting a more racially and ethnically diverse faculty. Two of our three new faculty members joining the college this fall are people of color: Daniel Kojo Schrade in painting and drawing and Ming Tso Chien in educational studies.
- The US students in our incoming Fall 2019 class were the most racially and ethnically diverse in the college's history, as we've made a concerted effort to recruit more domestic students of color. As exciting and as tangible as these improvements are, I recognize that we still have a tremendous amount of work in front of us to diversify our students, faculty, staff, and trustees.
- In 2018, COA students formed the college's first Black Student Union on campus. The BSU is an affinity group for students who identify as Black. They plan events for the school to share Black culture, and also come together to forge community and a sense of belonging.