



# Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

May 12, 2023



## A Message from Dr. Keith Johnson, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion

**“Navigating the Resistance to DEI”**

Dear Friends,

Within the last few years many disparities between different ethnic and racial groups have received greater attention. Many of those inequities ranged from educational attainment, housing, healthcare, incarceration, and a host of others. At least in part, recently what fueled the conversation regarding equity, inclusion, diversity and social justice was the deaths of Mr. George Floyd, Ms. Bryanna Taylor, and several other black Americans who lost their lives at the hands of police officers.

Almost immediately after their deaths, higher education, like many other industries, organizations and businesses began to self-reflect. During this self-reflection period, many institutions learned a lot about themselves and discovered processes and policies that often benefitted some populations while at the same time, harming others.

~ continued on page 2 ~



Patriotism is love of country. But you can't love your country without loving your countrymen and countrywomen. We don't always have to agree, but we must empower each other, we must find the common ground, we must build bridges across our differences to pursue the common good.

~ Cory Booker, US Senator ~

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## Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

Though many universities, including ETSU had diversity offices, multicultural centers, bridge programs, mentoring programs, diversity scholarships, and you name it, already in place; the disparities in educational attainment continued to persist.

The United States is failing to make good on its promise of equal access to opportunity and prosperity for those “who have”, compared to those “who have not”. As universities began to invest more and more resources, including financial and staffing into addressing diversity, equity and inclusion challenges it attracted the attention of many state officials, especially those in red states.

This attention has led to a direct pushback by many states on issues, efforts and initiatives that support DEI. Recently, high-profile governor, Ron DeSantis has been on a crusade to eliminate DEI initiatives from state colleges and universities across the state of Florida. In fact, there are a collection of topics, including book banning, that the governor has meshed together under the umbrella of critical race theory.

And all since anti-DEI efforts and initiatives received a lot of attention and media coverage that appears to encourage similar activities in other states. DeSantis has often been referenced in the media as “America’s Governor” and his impact is being seen and felt throughout this nation. He is proposing legislation that would eliminate programs and initiatives that will sideline DEI efforts.

If approved, the bill may include proposals to restrict how race and identity are discussed in educational settings. Given these approvals, the potential exists to ice or even overturn efforts at colleges and universities to strive to create or foster an environment of belonging for all students.

This is definitely not a good way to improve access for marginalized or underrepresented populations of people.

I focus on Florida because it is one of many states visibly and aggressively looking to undo DEI efforts and initiatives in colleges and universities. Unfortunately, many states have already begun reversing DEI efforts in anticipation of a time when DEI will be a thing of the past.

The [Chronical of Higher Education](#) tracks Anti-Legislation that has been proposed. Currently, there are at least 19 states that have either introduced bills, are at the final legislative approval stage or have tabled or failed to pass.

There are many motivating factor for aggressive anti-DEI bills across the country, such as the elimination of teaching Black history in our schools. One could be that banning the teaching of Black history is not about learning exactly who Black people are, but rather avoiding teaching and learning about inclusive U.S. history.

## Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

Regarding Black history, it can be fun to learn about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, Oprah Winfrey and former President Barak Obama. But to teach Black history would also include teaching about our past that is not always pleasant and at times, downright savage. To teach Black history would mean also teaching about Black people being enslaved by white people and sold and traded.

Teaching Black history would include teaching about how Black men and women were publicly hung by their necks with nooses by white people as a form of discipline and control. Teaching Black history also includes teaching about how black inventions were stolen by white people and promoted as their own.

And if you don't think it can get any worse, teaching Black history would also include teaching about the brutal death of Emmett Till, the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, and Bloody Sunday on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL, to name a few.

I know this month's message is difficult to receive. However, in order for our institutions, governments, and other entities to heal and move forward in a positive direction, it is important that, at a minimum, we acknowledge our past, own it and develop strategies and systems of equity, inclusion and belongingness to begin healing much of the damage that our past brought us.

As we look forward, canceling cultures, dismissing and devaluing some populations of people, including LGBTQ+ and stripping our country of part of its history is not serving the best interest of this country.

Current demographics show that America is more diverse now than at any other time in its history. The trend of increased diversity will continue beyond our lifetime. These demographic shifts are currently and will continue to be reflected throughout our society, including, higher education.

These trends show significant increases in college students who identify as Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander or two or more races, while also seeing a decrease in white student participation in higher education.

In addition, there are persistent trends of African American and Hispanic male students having the lowest graduation and persistence rates among college students. ETSU retention for these students reflects those same trends. For example, the 2016 overall cohort of students who enrolled at ETSU graduated at 39% in 4 years and 55% in 6 years. However, Black/African American male students in that same cohort graduated at 13% and 36% respectively. Likewise, the Hispanic /Latino male population graduated at 20% and 33% during the same periods.

## Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

ETSU is deliberately and intentionally assessing its practices and systems that serve as road blocks to retention and graduation: specifically, targeting admissions, financial aid, advising and overall campus navigation, climate, and engagement.

ETSU will also scrutinize college transitions, student support technology, change management, data reporting infrastructure and accountability and equity – mindedness. ETSU is fully committed to closing the equity gaps as a priority for the university. Please visit our [Moonshot website](#) to learn of all of the wonderful things that the university is doing to be more equitable and inclusive as the institution makes the Herculean effort to live out its values which include the following:

**PEOPLE** come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential;

**RELATIONSHIPS** are built on honesty, integrity, and trust;

**DIVERSITY** of people and thought is respected;

**EXCELLENCE** is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic;

**EFFICIENCY** is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources; and

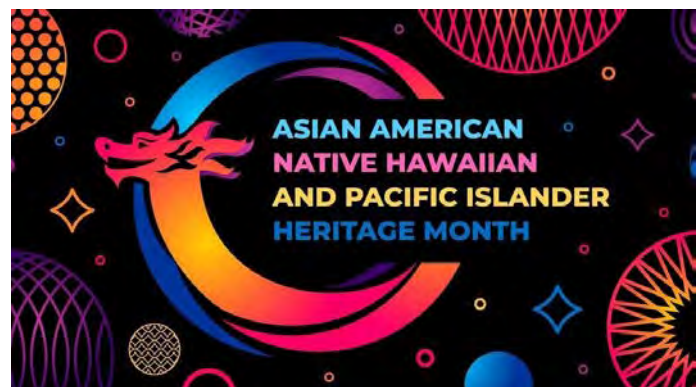
**COMMITMENT** to intellectual achievement is embraced.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Keith Johnson

## Asian American/Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islander Heritage Month

In May, during Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, we recognize the history and achievements of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders across our nation. Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders make our nation more vibrant through diversity of cultures, languages, and religions.

The American story as we know it would be impossible without the strength, contributions, and legacies of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders who have helped build and unite this country in each successive generation. From laying railroad tracks, tilling fields, and starting businesses, to caring for our loved ones and honorably serving our nation in uniform.



## Meet Dr. Pi-Ming Yeh, Associate Professor, College of Nursing

*My names is Pi-Ming Yeh, an Associate Professor at the College of Nursing at East Tennessee State University. I was born in Taiwan and came to Johnson City, Tennessee in August 2022. I have a son George and daughter-in-law Tiffany, and a daughter Joy and son-in-law Peter. In my free time I enjoy rollerblading, dancing, singing hymns, and listening to good sermons. Taking pictures of beautiful flowers and beautiful scenery is another hobby of mine. I believe in every good thing from the heavenly father's blessing and glory to Him. According to my study results, spiritual well-being is an important factor to increase a person's psychological well-being and decrease anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.*



*From 2014 to 2023, I published 14 peer-reviewed scholarly articles in premier journals and 8 chapters in books related to nursing, family caregiver reactions, and psychological well-being.*

*Over the last several years I have received the Missouri Western Foundation Dr. James V. Mehl Award for Outstanding Faculty Scholarship (2017) and the Jesse Lee Myers Excellence in Teaching Award (2011). I also received four Marita G. Titler Conduct of Research Poster Awards (2015, 2017, 2018, and 2021) at a National Evidence-Based Practice Conference.*

*Currently, I am the president of Epsilon Sigma at-Large Chapter and have done fifty oral and poster presentations at international and national conferences in Melbourne, Australia; Taipei, Taiwan; USA; and San Juan, Puerto Rico hosted by Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society and other nursing societies.*

*Some of my recent publications include:*

Pi-Ming Yeh (2023). The Journey from Drug Addiction to Drug Withdrawal after Participating in Taiwan Christian Gospel Rehabilitation. *The Journal of Nursing Research*  
<https://journals.lww.com/jnr-twna/pages/default.aspx>

Pi-Ming Yeh (2022-2023). A Testimony of Drug Withdrawal: From a Robber to a Pastor. *Journal of Christian Nursing*.  
<https://journals.lww.com/journalofchristiannursing/pages/default.aspx>

Pi-Ming Yeh, Lorna Moxham, Christopher Patterson, Carolyn Antoniou and Jennchang Liou (2023). The Comparisons of Psychological Well-being, Coping Strategies, and Emotional Problems between Taiwanese and Australian Nursing Students., *The Journal of Nursing Research*, 31(2), 1-13.  
<https://doi.org/10.1097/jnr.0000000000000543>

Pi-Ming Yeh and Gavin Waters, Path Analysis testing the Development of Personality and Psychological Well-being Model, *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 43(1) 2021, 25-35.  
[doi:DOI: 10.1177/0193945920932559 ]  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0193945920932559>

Pi-Ming Yeh, The influences of family interaction and spiritual well-being on USA old-people's depression and anxiety., *Healthy Aging Research*, 7(3) 2018, 1-8.[doi:10.12715/har.2018.7.10.] <https://www.longdom.org/healthy-aging-research.html> ISSN: 2261-7434



# Memorial Day - May 29, 2023

Memorial Day, which is celebrated on the last Monday in May, **honors service members who have died in military service to the nation.** The holiday has roots dating back to the post-Civil War era, when citizens would informally place spring flower memorials on the graves of fallen soldiers.

How you can honor the fallen this year:

1. Take a Walk Through Your Local Veterans Cemetery.

[Mountain Home National Cemetery](#) located in Johnson City, TN is open daily from sunrise to sunset. Originally known as the Mountain Home Branch of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteered Soldiers, the facility was the product of sustained efforts by Tennessee Congressman Walter Preston Brownlow. In 1901 Congress approved a bill introduced by Brownlow to establish a national home in the Johnson City area. A designated board of managers chose a 450-acre site and commissioned New York architect J. H. Freedlander to design 36 French Renaissance-style buildings. The home opened October 15, 1903. Five years later, special dispensation was granted to permit the interment of Congressman Brownlow in the Mountain Home cemetery. He and his wife occupy the only graves inside Monument Circle.

The Mountain Home Branch of the National Homes was the ninth, and last, of its kind funded by Congress to care for Union veterans of the Civil War. In 1973, it was transferred to the Veterans Administration and the home cemetery became a national cemetery.

The cemetery is part of the Mountain Home Branch-National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers National Historic Landmark district, designated on June 17, 2011.

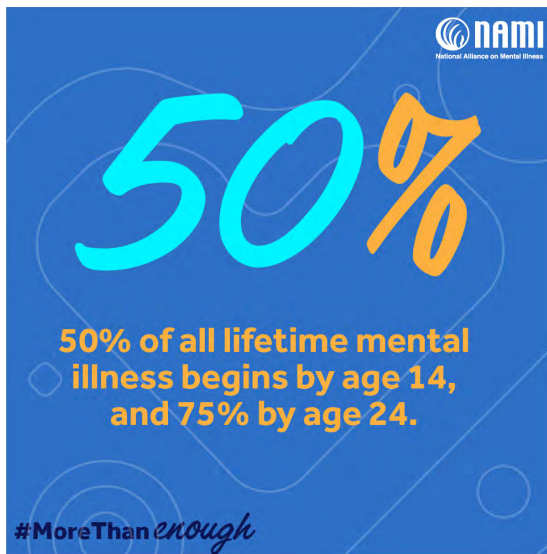
2. Learn About [Gold Star Families](#) — The designation “Gold Star Family” is reserved for families of military members who have died in the line of duty. This title is meant to honor the service member’s ultimate sacrifice while acknowledging their family’s loss, grief and continued healing.

How did the term gold star originate? During World War I, families displayed small banners with a blue star for every immediate family member serving in the armed forces. If their service member died in service, the family replaced the blue star with a gold star. The gold star let the community know that their service member died or was killed while serving their country.

**“To care for him who shall have borne the battle, for his widow and his orphan.”**  
**Abraham Lincoln 1865**

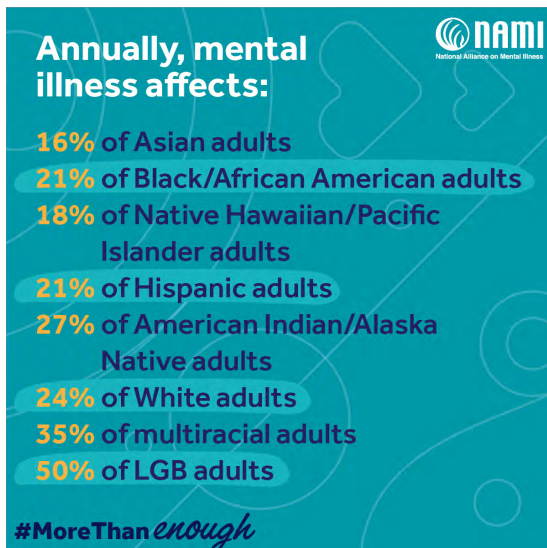


# May is Mental Health Awareness Month



## ETSU Counseling Center

- Connecting all ETSU Students to Mental Health Services and Resources throughout Campus.
- Counseling Center staff are available to provide consultations to faculty and staff about a student of concern. Call (423)439-3333 or email [counselingcenter@etsu.edu](mailto:counselingcenter@etsu.edu) to set up consultation.



## ETSU Community Counseling Clinic

- The Community Counseling Clinic offers free counseling services to ETSU students and members of the community.
- Individual counseling for adults, adolescents, and children is available, as well as couples counseling and family therapy is provided by their counselors-in-training.



## ETSU Employee Assistance Program

- The Employee Assistance Program provides consultation, self-help resources and referral for employees and their eligible family members who are experiencing personal problems which are likely to impact work performance and/or personal well-being. Examples of problems that may be addressed include substance abuse, family or marital problems, workplace stress, or chronic illness.

# Moon Shot For Equity Best Practice Teams

## ETSU's Tier 1 Best Practice Teams

### Hold Reform

<b>Team Lead</b>	Tom Donohoe
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Conduct holds audit; disaggregate holds data and remove/reform holds that place an undue barrier in the student experience

### Micro-Grants

<b>Team Lead</b>	Michelle Byrd
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Audit existing retention, emergency, and completion grants; develop institutional strategies to connect students to needed funds

### Coordinated Care

<b>Team Lead</b>	Ethan Hutchinson
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Build a foundation of adoption in Navigate; Expand Coordinated Care Network; Refine and expand early alerts & progress reports

### Transfer Student Experience

<b>Team Lead</b>	Sharon McGee
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Identify barriers for transfer students in academic pathways, credit transfer policies, onboarding, and student experience

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## Best Practice Team Process



### Phase 1: Lay the Groundwork

Team Leader Planning; Team Activation



### Phase 2: Inquiry

Data Discovery; Process, Policies & People Discovery; Explore Solutions



### Phase 3: Recommendations

Propose Solutions; Develop Implementation Plan



### Phase 4: Implement & Evaluate

Implement Plan; Evaluate Disaggregated Data; Formulate New Recommendations/Plans

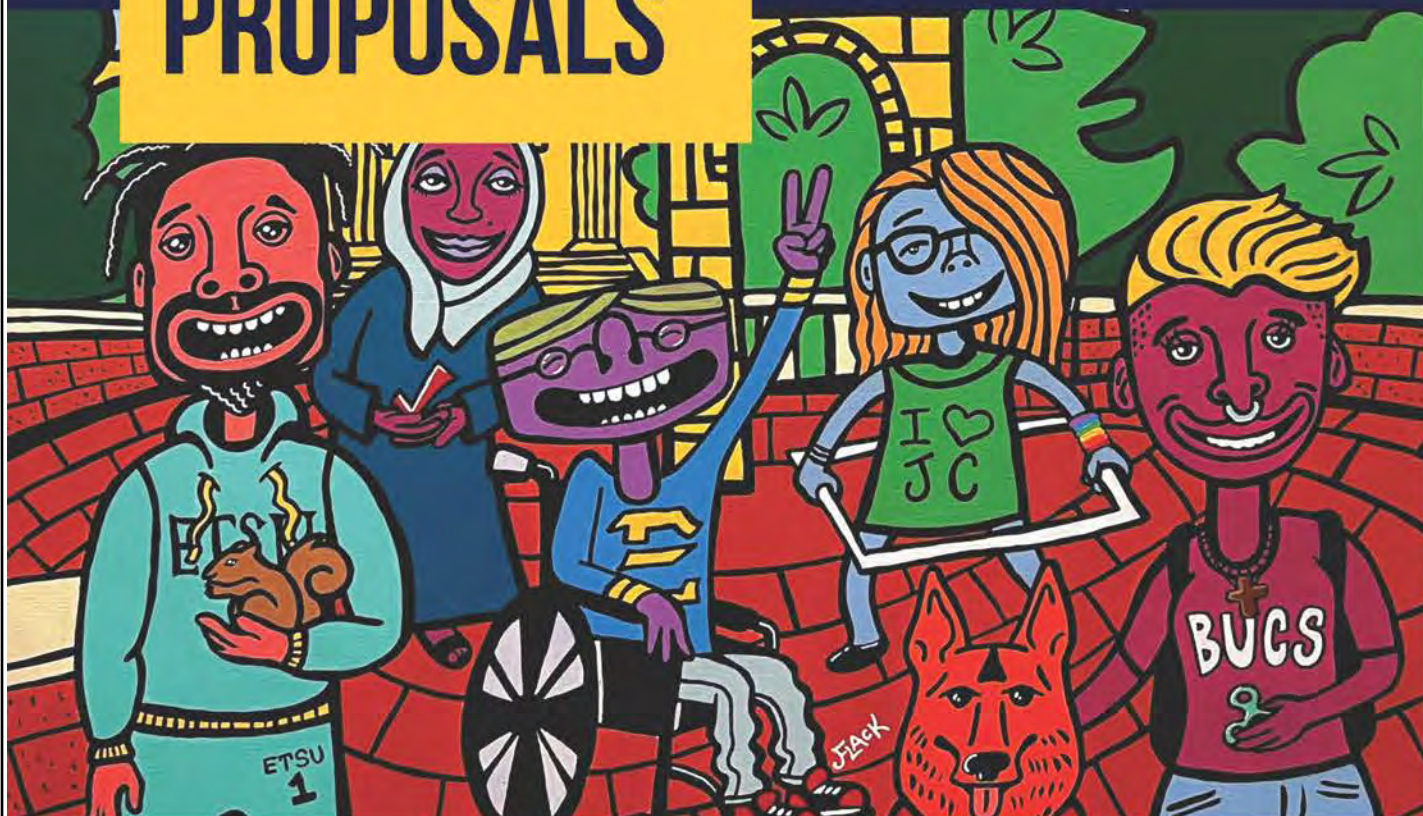
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# CALL FOR PROPOSALS



EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
UNIVERSITY



Proposals due  
**MAY 15**



**Equity & Inclusion**  
CONFERENCE

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

East Tennessee State University will hold its fifth annual **Equity and Inclusion Conference** September 28-30. Researchers and practitioners from education institutions and community organizations are invited to submit proposals to present.

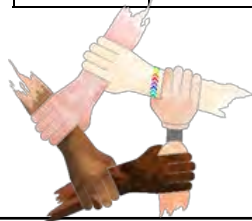
This up-and-coming event is expected to draw more than 300 participants. Past keynote presenters include Bryan Terrell Clark, Wes Moore, and Michael Yellow Bird.

[etsu.edu/equity/conference](https://etsu.edu/equity/conference)

ETSU is an Equal Opportunity Educational Institution/Employer. ETSU-MQ

## Upcoming Events

May 2023				
Monday	May 22nd	<b><i>Strategically Recruiting Employees of Color</i></b> Discussion Lead: Ryan Davis, USC Race and Equity Center	1:00-3:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
June 2023				
Tuesday	June 13th	Lunch and Learn <b><i>DEI &amp; Civic Engagement</i></b> Discussion Lead: Nathan Farnor, Coordinator, Leadership and Civic Engagement	12:00-1:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
Thursday Friday	June 29th June 30th	<b><i>Supporting and Retaining Employees of Color</i></b> Discussion Lead: Dr. Toby Jenkins, USC Race and Equity Center	1:00-3:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
July 2023				
Tuesday	July 18th	Lunch and Learn <b><i>Intersectionality</i></b> Discussion Lead: Khia Hudgins-Smith, MS, LPC-MHSP, NCC, Diversity Focused Clinical Counselor	12:00-1:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
Wednes.	July 26th	<b><i>Accountability and Incentives for Advancing Racial Equity</i></b> Discussion Lead: USC Race and Equity Center	1:00-3:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
August 2023				
Tuesday	August 1st	Lunch and Learn <b><i>The Libraries' Role in Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</i></b> Discussion Lead: Christiana Keinath, Health Sciences Librarian, Assistant Professor, Sherrod Library/Research & Instruction Services	12:00-1:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
Thursday	August 24th	<b><i>Fostering and Sustaining Inclusive Classrooms for Students of Color</i></b> Discussion Lead: USC Race and Equity Center	1:00-3:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
September 2023				
Thurs.- Saturday	Sept. 28-30th	5th Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference <b><i>Beyond 'Checking a Box': Building and Sustaining Campus-Wide Engagement for Belonging</i></b>	TBA	D.P. Culp Student Center



### COMMUNITY VOICES

Helping People Hear Each Other...  
One Story at a Time

[Click here](#) to read Issue 4 of the ETSU Office of Equity and Inclusion's quarterly magazine.



# eConvenings

## East Tennessee Higher Education Regional Alliance

# USC Race and Equity Center

This professional learning series is for full-time and part-time employees at Alliance member institutions. Each month, nationally renowned equity experts will offer a highly-engaging live session via Zoom on a different racial equity topic. Useful tools and practical strategies will be provided in every synchronous three-hour experience. Every campus can send up to 400 employees to each session – it could be the same 400 people, or a different set each month. While there is no cost, advance registration is required for each individual session.

### **Understanding and Addressing Implicit Bias**

Thursday, January 26 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_1](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_1)

### **Engaging in Productive Conversations About Race and Racism**

Tuesday, February 28 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_2](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_2)

### **Understanding the Effects of Racism on Students' Experiences and Outcomes**

Thursday, March 30 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_3](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_3)

### **Confronting Explicit Acts of Racism and Racial Violence on Campus**

Wednesday, April 19 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_4](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_4)

### **Strategically Recruiting Employees of Color**

Monday, May 22 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_5](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_5)

### **Supporting and Retaining Employees of Color**

Thursday, June 30 | 1-3pm EST Register at

[www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_6](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_6)

### **Accountability and Incentives for Advancing Racial Equity**

Wednesday, July 26 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_7](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_7)

### **Fostering and Sustaining Inclusive Classrooms for Students of Color**

Thursday, August 24 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_8](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_8)

### **Meaningfully Integrating Racial Topics Across the Curriculum**

Friday, September 29 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_9](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_9)

### **Engaging Students of Color in High-Impact Educational Practices and Experiences**

Tuesday, October 24 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_10](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_10)

### **Using Disaggregated Data to Identify and Address Racial Inequities**

Thursday, November 9 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_11](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_11)

### **Strategic Planning and Action for Racial Equity**

Tuesday, December 5 | 1-3pm EST

Register at [www.uscrec.info/ETHERA\\_12](http://www.uscrec.info/ETHERA_12)

**race.usc.edu**

Direct all inquiries to  
**Dr. Minh Tran** (mctran@usc.edu)

**USC** Race and  
Equity Center

# EQUITY CONNECT



**INTERACT**



**CONNECT**



**SHARED LEARNING**



**FORM INTEREST GROUPS**



**VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES  
OF PRACTICE**



**FIND RESOURCES**

Learn more at  
[equityconnect.usc.edu](https://equityconnect.usc.edu)

This portal is for employees of colleges and universities that are members of the USC Race and Equity Center's alliances, equity institutes, leadership academies, and other partnerships. It includes video recordings and assets from eConvenings, as well as other downloadable racial equity resources. This portal also allows persons with authenticated profiles to form and actively participate in virtual communities of practice. Posing questions of practice, offering advice to colleagues, sharing effective practices, and fostering new collaborations are all possible in the virtual communities.



## Meet Diversity Champion



**Heidi Marsh, M.A.**  
Coordinator,  
Undergraduate  
Research & Creative  
Activities  
Honors College

*The Office of Equity and Inclusion is meant to help provide a welcoming and equitable experience for students, faculty, staff, and community members or visitors on campus.*

*That environment can be fostered in many ways -- through programming that represents a wide variety of communities and interests, through advocacy for equitable treatment and representation of people, and through policies and procedures that recognize the differing needs of various populations. I see the Office of Equity and Inclusion as a representation of the University's commitments to its first value of "People First," and serving in this capacity means that it has a duty and responsibility to both listen to the needs of the people it serves and to be the voice for that community to other parts of the university and administration.*

*The role of the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council should be to act as the earpiece for the larger campus. I see them as a group with their "ear to the ground" so to speak, a group who is*

*in touch with campus needs and is willing to find creative avenues to meet those needs. Using DEI best practices, they can make sure the Office has the resources it needs from a variety of perspectives to move the campus forward in DEI initiatives.*

*I encourage people to honor the uniqueness of other individuals by seeking out the voices and perspectives that are marginalized in whatever situation or conversation I might be in. For example, in my WGSS 2010: Introduction to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies course, we spend time reading, watching, and listening to different stories about how folks navigate the world. I encourage my students to think about what surprises them in the stories we read and to find places where they might share experiences or not. I invite them to seek out stories that show different experiences.*

*When navigating difficult discussions, it's okay to recognize that it will be uncomfortable. Finding that place to work from creates a sense that everyone can see each other's humanness. From there, we can share different perspectives, hopefully hear one another, and get curious about why we have such different perspectives. We don't have to agree on everything to work together, and it doesn't always have to feel good. We only need one common goal, and sometimes that common goal is just to hear each other.*

*~ Heidi Marsh ~*

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**Webpage:** <https://www.etsu.edu/equity/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/etsuequity/>

**Instagram and Twitter** - [etsu\\_equity](#)

**We would like to  
hear from you.**

If you have an announcement, event, accomplishment, etc. you would like to have published in the newsletter send them to Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu).

To add a name to our mailing list, please email Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu).