

The 2020 TSSW Student Diversity and Inclusion Report: Leading the Path to Better

“Racism is a problem for all of us, black and white. The denial of the full humanity of any person diminishes us all. Racism hurts everyone and challenges everyone.” - Vanessa Julye

HIGHLIGHTS

This report addresses issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity at TSSW. As President Fitts states in his Message to the Tulane community, **“We must commit to making Tulane a more inclusive and supportive home for all. Each of us is challenged to address our behaviors, practices and systems.”** This report includes findings from three surveys: a survey specific to diversity, a general student survey, and diversity items included in course evaluations. Regarding diversity, inclusion, curriculum and student support, the overall TSSW MSW program is pulling in mediocre ratings, with just over 60% satisfied with the overall program. The good news is that there are plenty of areas for improvement. Student concerns and suggestions include the following:

- Stronger integration of themes related to diversity and oppression throughout curriculum
- Clearer connection between themes of diversity and oppression with clinical and macro practice
- More intention and work around including online students and advanced standing students
- Transparency about steps to address the need for more diversity training/programming for faculty, staff, and students.
- More equity and inclusion between the on-campus and online programs regarding services and benefits received by students in the on-campus program.

“Racism has no place at our university or in our community.”

*President Michael Fitts, A
Message from the President
June 12, 2020*

One of the most compelling quotes from students was:

“This is a space where students of color are the only student of color in the room. As a student of color, I cannot tell you how exhausting this is. It's honestly suffocating for the people of color in this program” (p. 10).

Other students supported the above concern and also provided areas of growth and aspiration for change within the TSSW MSW program, including:

- “Students would benefit from a curriculum that would allow for more [Diversity and SJ] opportunities to learn related topics throughout our entire program, [rather than in first semester].
- TSSW to become a “diversity-conscious program” currently, “disliked/judged by the community (rightly) for being racist and elitist”
- “I had more conversations about diversity in my undergraduate education.”
- We need “helpful tools of how to address [class distinctions or racial distinctions] differences as practitioners.”
- We need more “time talking about what [diversity and oppression] actually looks like in our internships and when we enter the workforce. For example...how best to be advocates when working in an established agency.”

- The “curriculum...is amazing but, my community is largely based of Latinos and Native Americans... I would like to try and incorporate more of the population that I will be working with.”
- “We all have to pay the same amount, we should have comparable learning experiences” regarding quality of professors ’experience, expertise, and research.”

Based on student data as well as faculty experiences and concerns, in this report, the Difficult Conversations Committee proposes an Action Plan focused on a commitment to anti-racism; ongoing training and support regarding diversity, inclusion and equity for faculty, staff, and students; and comprehensive examination of diversity content throughout the curriculum.

DIVERSITY SURVEY RESULTS 2017-2018

The overall purpose of the Diversity Survey was to assess students’ perception of the diversity of the cohort and faculty/staff and how topics of diversity and oppression are covered in the curriculum. Fifty-three students participated in the survey; 66% were on-campus and 34% were online. There were considerable differences between the on campus and online responses to TSSW efforts around diversity. The online cohorts reported more favorable rankings (see Table 1).

Table 1. Students Rankings of TSSW Diversity Efforts.

	ON CAMPUS	ONLINE
TSSW works to establish a commitment to diversity	43%	89%
TSSW places priority on recruiting a diverse MSW cohort	29%	95%
TSSW places priority on recruiting diverse faculty and staff	48%	83%
TSSW prepares you to work with a diverse range of populations	59%	84%

Students also provided invaluable open ended responses, which provides a more in-depth understanding of diversity issues as they pertain to TSSW.

Online students tend to feel the program is diverse and that diversity and oppression are reflected in the school and curriculum. One student noted that, “Our ages, genders, and sexual orientations are also reflective of TUSW’s thoughtful efforts of inclusion (3).” Another stated that the faculty and staff, “are all aware of current social issues and each of them have stressed the need to provide care that is relevant to the needs of the clients.”

“We can begin to work systemically to reduce anti-Black racism and racism that impacts the lives of all people of color in our community.”

*President Michael Fitts, A
Message from the President
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On campus students tended to be more negative about diversity and inclusion. Students report challenges with how the program is represented in the community. For example one student noted that the were, “disappointed and disheartened by TSSW’s understanding and conception of diversity as a quota as opposed to an institution-wide prioritization of people of color and anti-oppressive leadership, curricula, student population, and faculty/staff population.”

Students report many professors are unsure how to facilitate conversations around diversity and oppression. The conversations can be lacking or surface-level. One student noted that, “Professors so far have shut down conversations that organically develop around these topics. It’s not on our syllabi so we have to organically talk about it and consider it alongside the White, Westernized material. We (the few students of color) have to bring diversity and oppression into the room (87).” Another student stated that, “I don’t think that the topics of diversity and oppression have been lacking. From my personal experience, it seems as though the cohort, and maybe professors, chose not to push those conversations to a truly meaningful level.”

GENERAL STUDENT SURVEY 2018-2019

Thirty-seven students of color participated in the survey; 71% were under 36 years of age. The majority (57%) identified as Black or African American; 20% identified as Hispanic, 9% identified as LatinX; 9% identified as multi-racial; and 6% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander. Almost all (94%) identified as female; 30% did not work, 55% worked full time, and 15% worked part-time. Fifty-four percent were registered as full-time and 45% were part-time. Six percent were advanced standing students; 70% were online and 30% were on campus.

Fifty-four students that identified as white participated in the survey; 20 were online students and 81% were under 36 years of age. The majority (85%) identified as female; 29% did not work, 37% worked full time, and 34% worked part-time. Seventy-eight percent were registered as full-time and 22% were part-time. Four percent were advanced standing students; 41% were online and 59% were on campus.

Percentages are presented on student satisfaction with various aspects and functions of the TSSW program. Approximately 60% of students were satisfied with the overall program (see Table 1). Table 1 shows a concern among on-campus students of color regarding “a learning environment that showed respect for diversity and difference.” Table 2 presents students’ satisfaction with various aspects of the program.

This table highlights concerns for on-campus students of color regarding “diversity within the curriculum.” Table 3 presents the ranked usefulness of functions among various MSW program components. The top two ranked components were *understanding why field is an essential part of social work education* and *helpfulness of the field supervisor*. The lowest ranked components were various scholarships and the licensing preparation course.

“All too often, we relied on the victims of racist action to address and the fix the problem of systemic racism.”

President Michael Fitts, A Message from the President June 12, 2020

Table 1. Percentage of Students Satisfied with the TSSW Program

	STUDENTS OF COLOR		WHITE STUDENTS
	ONLINE	ON CAMPUS	ONLINE & ON CAMPUS
I am well trained to provide integrated clinical and community practice	70%	66%	70%
I am satisfied are/were you with the MSW program	70%	47%	75%

The TSSW provided a learning environment that showed respect for diversity and difference.	80%	15%	84%
The TSSW provided a supportive and inclusive learning environment.	68%	31%	69%
I would recommend the TSSW MSW program to others.	72%	31%	79%

Table 2. Most and Least Satisfying Aspects of the Program

	STUDENTS OF COLOR		WHITE STUDENTS
MOST SATISFYING ASPECTS	ONLINE	ON CAMPUS	ON CAMPUS & ONLINE
Courses	16%	7%	17%
Faculty/Adjuncts	18%	33%	27%
Field	24%	27%	12%
Diversity within the curriculum	18%	0%	14%
Other students	24%	27%	27%
Other*	2%	7%	4%
LEAST SATISFYING ASPECTS			
Courses	30%	18%	10%
Faculty/Adjuncts	3%	6%	0%
Field	17%	0%	10%
Diversity within the curriculum	10%	41%	10%
Other students	10%	18%	5%
Other [±]	30%	18%	65%

Note. *Other most satisfying = convenience of online study; the capstone seminar course creates a space to have in-depth conversations about the nature of knowledge. [±]Other least satisfying = Flexibility of courses, diversity within the curriculum, speakers, readings and assignments overload, a couple of unqualified professors, lack of diversity, field placement support, cost of tuition, course materials are a little outdated, not much variety among the electives offered, only 50% of instructors are qualified, assignments are busy work.

Table 3. Percent of Students That Strongly Agreed or Agreed regarding Various Program Components

VARIOUS PROGRAM ASPECTS	STUDENTS OF COLOR		WHITE STUDENTS
	ONLINE	ON CAMPUS	ONLINE & ON CAMPUS
The financial aid process is clear.	32%	31%	32%

The financial aid process is transparent.	32%	31%	32%
Student organizations were useful.	8%	23%	5%
Licensing prep. courses was useful.	0%	8%	0%
Licensing practice tests were useful.	0%	15%	5%
TSSW sponsored events outside of the classroom (e.g. Newcomb Museum, IPE, Social Justice Lecture were useful.	8%	23%	0%
MSW Orientation program was helpful and set-up me to be successful in the MSW program.	48%	38%	58%
The various scholarships and how to apply for them is a clear process.	12%	0%	5%
The various scholarships and how to apply for them is a transparent process.	12%	8%	5%
Field was the most exciting part of the program.	65%	100%	67%
The field placement process was clear and easy to understand.	83%	58%	43%
I got the field placement I wanted.	71%	80%	43%
My field liaison was helpful.	88%	75%	50%
My field supervisor was helpful.	95%	100%	70%
Field prepared me for social work practice.	81%	100%	82%
My field seminar was useful and was a great addition to my education.	68%	43%	72%
I understand why field is an essential part of social work education.	100%	100%	93%
My complaints or needs were addressed in a timely fashion.	62%	46%	47%
The graduation process was clear.	20%	39%	15%
Goldman and other support services through campus were helpful.	20%	0%	26%
The MSW application process was clear.	80%	69%	89%
The recruitment materials (e.g. view book, Website) were helpful.	64%	31%	74%

COURSE EVALUATIONS

Procedures

Due to student and faculty concerns, in spring, 2020, 10 questions related to diversity and inclusion were added to end-of semester course evaluations for all TSSW students. This report summarizes findings from these evaluation questions. Full-time and part-time students completed evaluations for on-campus and online courses in the MSW, DSW and DRLA programs. The evaluations were confidential and anonymous with the data de-identified for this report. Course evaluations were completed for 128 course sections. The questions, created by TSSW faculty, assessed level of agreement or disagreement with 10 Likert-scaled statements that assessed addressed three global areas:

- 1) Evaluation of teacher competency in classroom management and facilitating difficult conversations about diversity
- 2) Student sense of psychological safety.
- 3) Student assessment of quantity and quality of diversity and inclusion content.

Possible responses ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. 5 questions were worded with higher scores indicating better outcomes and 5 questions were worded with lower scores indicating better outcomes.

“Meaningful change will require the engagement and contributions of the entire community – we need to hear your thoughts and insights to build a more just Tulane.”

*President Michael Fitts, A
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Analysis

For this analysis, benchmarks were met if scores were 5 (somewhat agree) or above for positive items and 3 (somewhat disagree) or below for negatively worded items. Average scores on each question for each class section as well as overall scores per question for courses with multiple sections were obtained. Then average scores per question across all courses and the number and percentage of class sections not meeting the benchmark for each question were calculated.

Findings

Findings indicate that for every question, there were some class sections that did not meet benchmarks. However, five questions stand out as indicating particular areas of concern (see Table 4). The first three questions are related to the instructor’s ability to effectively and sensitively facilitate discussions about diversity. The last two questions address inclusion of course content related to diversity, with a higher degree of concern regarding “topics related to diverse groups other than race including gender, LGBTQ, religion, and class”. **In addition to the findings in Table 4, 61% (78/128) of class sections indicated concerns in 4 to 10 areas related to race, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom.** The course evaluation findings suggest a strong need for ongoing training and support for regular and adjunct faculty in facilitating classroom discussion and interactions about race and diversity and for a comprehensive review of course diversity content.

Table 4. Summary Outcomes for Questions on which ≥20% of Sections Did Not Meet Benchmarks

QUESTION	AVERAGE SCORE	# OF SECTIONS NOT MEETING BENCHMARK	% OF SECTIONS NOT MEETING BENCHMARK
The instructor puts me in a position where I feel I must educate students about my culture/race.	2.98**	59	46% of class sections did not meet benchmark of somewhat disagree through strongly disagree
The instructor addresses inappropriate or inaccurate statements made by other students regarding race and other issues related to diversity, such as LGBTQ, class, religion, ableism, gender, and ageism.	4.98*	60	47% of class sections did not meet benchmark of somewhat agree through strongly agree
When the instructor in this class senses discomfort, they inappropriately redirect classroom discussions related to race and other issues related to diversity.	3.08**	62	48% of class sections did not meet benchmark of somewhat disagree through strongly disagree
Content on race and diversity is adequately reflected in this class and course assignments	5.43*	35	27% of class sections did not meet benchmark of somewhat agree through strongly agree

There is adequate content on topics related to diverse groups other than race including gender, LGBTQ, religion, and class.	5*	62	48% of class sections did not meet benchmark of somewhat agree through strongly agree
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*Positively worded items. Benchmark is 5 (somewhat agree) or above.

**Negatively worded items. Benchmark is 3 (somewhat disagree) or below.

STUDENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCERNS REGARDING RACE

Quotes from **students reported open ended responses** for recommendations and concerns included:

- “Inclusive online events/speakers, Canvas training for instructors, community leader lectures, stipends, clinical courses, internship support group, networking events, organizations/clubs for students of color, queer and trans students—someone to talk with to address issues with racism in the classroom and other microaggressions. Flexibility in internship placements.”
- “As a black student, I didn’t feel supported and properly represented.”
- “A better prep for licensure exam, more transparent introduction to services for advanced standing students, more integration of diversity into the curriculum, very limited field options for online students, Less redundancy among assignments in first semester.”
- “Classroom discussions were very one-sided and not inclusive to those with opposing views.
- Focus on correcting errors in CANVAS for online students, train your administrative staff to be respectful and supportive of online students.”
- “This experience has been so disappointing. Instructors blamed the sloppiness of the curriculum on accreditation. In one class, my instructor missed 6 sessions. This semester, one of my professors ended his class 30 minutes early 3 weeks in a row because he simply didn't know what time the class hours are.”
- “The work and expectations were way too easy and I feel like I gained absolutely no more knowledge than what I had after graduating with a BSW.”

STUDENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCERNS REGARDING EQUITY AND INCLUSION AMONG ONLINE STUDENTS

- The online program has much more homework than the on ground program. I did both programs for one year each and it is much more work on the online program. Also, the set up for the online program requires independent reading, homework and then lecture. Many times, I was graded on homework that was not review in class first and did not seem fair.
- The online MSW program used the flipped learning model, meaning students read and complete major assignments prior to a class lecture of the session material.
- Administration does not appear to fully support the grievances of the online students. Large assignments should be coordinated between professors ahead of time. More effort should be made to connect cohorts, so that they can share resources and advice.
- Online students are given more homework than on-ground students, which can be extreme and interferes with getting the proper self-care.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN

Through the following steps, we commit to become an anti-racist organization. According to President Fitts, “We cannot simply state that we are against racism: we must endeavor to be actively anti-racist.” Being guided by both our NASW Code of Ethics and the President’s directive, TSSW has the opportunity to lead these efforts.

These steps are by not comprehensive or complete. They overlap in time and may not happen in a linear fashion.

Step 1: Mandate that all faculty, adjunct faculty, staff employed at TSSW watch a canvas video (TBD) annually addressing racism/diversity/microaggressions and that this is part of every contract and annual evaluation as a condition of employment.

Step 2: Have every professor commit to engaging in a discussion the first day of class regarding the diversity statement and Winters Institute guideposts.

Step 3: Have every professor, adjunct faculty, administrator, and staff person sign a pledge to become anti-racist.

Step 4: Academic Affairs should be intentional and thoughtful about who teaches which classes ensuring that the professors assigned to classes based on ability to effectively teach.

Step 5: Students attend training by Community Engagement Advocates to lead difficult conversations. Work with these students to hold 1 – 2 discussions in the fall.

<https://cps.tulane.edu/programs/community-engagement-advocates>

We have limited spots for the summer training which will take place 8am - 5pm daily May 17-24, 2020 uptown. They could potentially receive elective credit for getting certified and participating in our existing course each semester (which meets Mondays 4pm-5pm or 5pm-6pm) They could also serve as facilitators specific to the dialogues requested by/for the school of social work. If we can work out a way to fit our curriculum into an existing course offered in your curriculum, we may be able to train all students in facilitating dialogues across difference. **Two students (Akailah Bulloch and Allia Foley) have been trained to date.**

Step 6: TSSW faculty & adjunct faculty work through *A Guide for Sustaining Conversation on Racism: Identity and our Mutual Humanity* and/or *Racial Healing Handbook: Practical Activities to Help you Challenge Privilege, Confront Systemic Racism and Engage in Collective Healing* books chapter by chapter (monthly conversation among faculty and adjunct faculty)

Other Books

- Derald Wing Sue's book – *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Conversations on Race*
- *White Fragility: Why it's Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*
- Courageous Conversations - <https://courageousconversation.com>
- NASW Code of Ethics – link everything back to our code

Step 7: Yearlong work with Kenneth Hardy, Kim Frierson or another expert regarding race and how to address these issues in the classroom.

Invite Kenneth Hardy, Kim Frierson or other experts to work with us over a year to help us figure out how to deal with and respond to issues of race and other differences more effectively and increase our confidence to engage in difficult conversations. Dedicate one day of the faculty retreat in the fall to kick off our work with Kim Frierson. Invite her back to 3 – 4 times over the academic year for ongoing work with us.

Step 8: Webpage on TSSW website dedicated to Racism, Equity, and Inclusion – State our commitment to this issue, backed by a concrete plan that addresses these issues and update our efforts on an ongoing basis.

Step 9: Dedicate half of new student orientation to issues related to racism, equity, and inclusion and let students organize around Diversity Coalition.

Step 10: Review all courses to identify racial, gender, and other content regarding minoritized communities. Ensure that race, equity, inclusion is infused in every class throughout our curriculum. Ensure that every student understands systemic racism and how to use that understanding and analysis to become social change agents.

Step 11: Racial (Identity) Processing Group/Class (Students) – Same groupwork (separate groups for whites and students of color to process race) is the first step. The second step is to come together in a diverse group. We will explore how this might look at the DSW level. Dr. Marva Lewis and Maureen Joseph have a history of leading these groups locally and nationally.

Step 12: Work towards equity and inclusions in terms of benefits and services offered to online students and make it comparable to what on-campus students receive. Work towards these efforts will spill over in the DSW and DRLA program.

Step 13: Sustain these efforts with tasks such as:

- White Affinity Group among Professors - White Professors who have skills to teach/work with other white faculty - Christina Roux, Reggie Ferreira, Stephanie Baus – May have to develop these white leaders (other adjuncts)
- Healing work among faculty of color – increase their capacity to move and have these conversation
- Partner with alumni who are interested in coming back to talk about their experiences

“We know that we can only become the best version of ourselves, both institutionally and individually, if our community and leadership truly reflects and uplifts all segments of our society.”

*President Michael Fitts, A Message from the President
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