

Board of Trustees of Mills College
Antiracism Working Group
Summary Report and Recommendations
October 14, 2021

“Antiracism is a transformative concept that reorients and re-energizes the conversation about racism...At its core, racism is a powerful system that creates false hierarchies of human value; its warped logic extends beyond race, from the way we regard people of different ethnicities or skin colors to the way we treat people of different sexes, gender identities, and body types.”

~Ibram X. Kendi

This report summarizes the work of the Board of Trustees of Mills College and its Antiracism Working Group, addressing anti-Black racism, antiracism, equity, inclusion, and social justice, from July 2020 through June 2021.

The Moment

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the ensuing global demonstrations for racial equity and justice in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, the Board of Trustees of Mills College (the board) seized the moment to form the Antiracism Working Group (ARWG), in July of 2020, to reckon with issues of racial bias and discrimination within the campus community and to promote antiracism, equity, and racial justice throughout campus policies and practices. Mills College is committed to addressing anti-Black racism, antiracism, diversity, inclusion, and equity, and long ago embraced social justice as its core institutional mission.

The first milestone of the ARWG was the “[Commitment to Antiracism](#),” which was endorsed by the board on October 15, 2020. Leading up to achieving this milestone, the threshold work had to be undertaken; ARWG set out to more broadly understand racism along with the concepts of “antiracism”—and what it means to be an “antiracist”—through many readings, including Ibram X. Kendi’s, “How To Be An Antiracist.” Studies of other readings and resources provided a historical context of racism which grounded the working group’s learning. Furthermore, numerous listening sessions were held with all campus stakeholders to learn of their experiences with on-campus racism, discrimination, and bias (implicit or explicit), which informed the working group’s consideration of its overall commitment to antiracism as an action and as embodied in its October 2020 antiracism statement.

I. Education, Training, and Self-Study: Understanding of the experience of racism and its impacts at the micro and macro levels and within the context of Mills College and higher education.

Throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, the ARWG worked to implement the board’s short- and long-term commitments to advancing antiracism within the board and at Mills College, seeking to:

- Engage trustees in an education and training program, supported by a bibliography developed by the Antiracism Working Group comprised of resources and tools, to increase a shared understanding of systemic racism within higher education, our communities, and the United States;
- Enrich the board's engagement and ongoing reflection on antiracism, personal and professional, through small group discussions outside the board room;
- Examine the experience of racism at Mills through conversations with stakeholder groups of faculty, staff, and students;
- Enlist the help of outside leaders in equity and inclusion in the greater Bay Area and beyond; and
- Work with College leaders to ensure and support active steps toward building and implementing the College's antiracism plan.

The Antiracism Working Group met sixteen times during the academic year, including meetings with the following campus stakeholders, to understand different perspectives on the experience of racism at Mills, the relevant history, and the current actions underway to address it:

- Provost and Dean of the Faculty
- Special Assistant to the President for Equity and Inclusion
- Members of the Asian Pacific Islander Students Alliance (APISA) + faculty advisors
- Members of the Southeast Asian/Middle Eastern/Asian Pacific Islanders
- Former members of the South Asian Students Alliance + faculty advisors
- Members of the Indigenous Women's Alliance (IWA) and faculty and administrators of the Race, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Ethnic Studies Department
- VP of Student Life and Dean of Students
- Assistant Dean for Advising, Careers & Global Learning; Co-Chair Latinx Task Force
- Members of the Black Faculty and Staff Association
- Members of the Black Student Collective
- Members of the AAMC Alumnae of Color Committee

During these conversations and listening sessions the ARWG heard a variety of perspectives, including both painful experiences and inspiring advocacy. The ARWG learned of strong grass-roots antiracist efforts underway and developed a deeper appreciation for the complexity of these issues on Mills' campus and on other college and university campuses and learning environments.

The board engaged in a six-month long education and training program that was organized thematically across several board meetings. For each meeting, readings and video links were included in the regular board materials, guest speakers were included at the front of the agenda, and optional small group discussions followed. January 2021 marked the launch of this program with guest speakers Drs. Biddy Martin and Brenda Allen, presidents of Amherst College and Lincoln University, respectively.

The Board of Trustees Antiracism Education and Training Program Syllabus¹ is a detailed outline of the programming with which the board engaged over the six-month period.

II. Foundation on Which to Build: What we've learned and accomplished.

Throughout the academic year, the ARWG worked with the full board, the President, College officers, the Special Assistant for Equity and Inclusion, and guest experts to listen, learn, and develop specific actions to advance antiracism at Mills College.

Trustees indicated an increased awareness of racism and antiracism and were appreciative of the opportunity for increased exposure as well as the small group discussions which deepened their understanding of the topic. The reactions by several trustees to this learning are captured below:

"All of the reading, links to panels, and discussion with experts in the field, exposed me to a much deeper understanding of what systemic racism actually means. I was humbled by the readings and information."

"This year of reading and videos has been very eye opening for me. I have not had the opportunity to read books or articles by Black authors, nor have I spent time in conversation with Black scholars."

As previously stated, in October 2020, the Board of Trustees approved its "Commitment to Antiracism" following in-depth consultation with key campus stakeholders. The board acted further to charge each of its standing committees with a review of relevant antiracist initiatives, policies, and practices within their committee purview and to assess their effectiveness, as well as to assess College initiatives, policies, and practices with respect to antiracism.

Furthermore, the Board of Trustees incorporated antiracism into its major goals for the 2020-2021 academic year. The board's overarching objective for the year was to: "Ensure Mills remains a viable and vital institution, supportive of students, faculty, staff and campus to fulfill its educational mission, including its commitment to anti-racism and gender equity, and prepare for potential alliances and opportunities."

In tandem with the ARWG's efforts, the College committed to addressing anti-Black racism through reallocating resources, strengthening equity response and support structures, and deepening training and education across campus constituencies. To that end, the President appointed a Special Assistant for Equity and Inclusion to work closely with other leaders at Mills, lead the development of a College-wide antiracism plan, and engage outside expertise in a campus climate study, and training and education for Mills' stakeholders. College officers took part in individual and collective antiracism training and education, and College divisions began a process to build antiracism plans that establish an antiracist vision, review current equity challenges, set goals, allocate responsibilities, and plan for assessment for their areas.

¹ Board of Trustees Antiracism Education and Training Program Syllabus, see Appendix I.

The College's "[Commitment to Antiracism](#)" was released in January 2021 and re-affirms Mills' values, commitment, and 2020-2021 goals.

Further, the Provost's Office established the Intersectional Antiracism Team—comprised of a cross section of the campus community including faculty, staff, students, and alumnae—to address equity efforts across divisional policies and practices, to craft solutions, and to engage in a co-design process to inform key areas of antiracism work in academic affairs, enrollment, and student financial services. The intersectional teams have begun an examination of:

- Classroom Climate and Microaggressions
- Complaints and Racial Incident Response Process
- Faculty and Staff Development and Reflection
- Teaching and Learning
- Faculty and Staff Hiring and Retention
- Student Services

III. Next Steps: Institutional responsibility and recommendations.

As the Board of Trustees continues to move the needle on antiracism, it confronts many issues to establish continuity and the advancement of antiracism principles:

- Setting out guiding principles for the College to create and establish an environment that supports vulnerable members of the community and that responds quickly and effectively to racist incidents (e.g., microaggressions, bias, etc.).
- Including one of the College's antiracism leaders (in the current structures, that would be a member of the IAT or the Special Assistant to the President for Equity and Inclusion) on a board committee like the Academic and Student Experience Committee or the External Engagement Committee.
- Developing a report-back mechanism to the Board of Trustees, perhaps through a standing agenda item related to progress being made in this area.
- Adding a full board session focused on improved processes for complaints and racial-incident response protocols (this is work that the IAT has taken the lead on).
- Identifying the board's antiracism priorities on an annual basis and evaluating progress toward addressing those priorities.
- Overseeing and assessing College efforts through annual listening sessions with campus stakeholders and annual reports to the full board from College equity and inclusion leaders.
- Building antiracism into the new institutional structures and priorities established for a proposed new Mills College at Northeastern.
- Continuing small group discussions among trustees and College officers organized around essential readings and other content that is curated with input from faculty, students, and staff.
- Ensuring board standing committees include and assess progress toward meeting at least one annual goal designed to address antiracism within the context of committee mandates.
- Writing an article in the Quarterly or being interviewed by the Campanile about the ARWG's work and impact.

- Sharing this summary report with the community and perhaps beyond as a foundational template for antiracism work among boards.

The Antiracism Working Group recommends the College consider:

- Reviewing hiring processes and job descriptions to improve the inclusivity of hiring and assessment by implementing the extensive research² demonstrating that valuing experience, over other factors such as motivation and capacity, is not effective in successful hiring or meeting inclusivity goals.
- Structuring an inclusive transition team and building new administrative structures that elevate antiracism in the potential Mills College-Northeastern University alliance.
- Developing and funding antiracism workshops run by experts for faculty, staff, and students.
- Committing to adopting restorative justice practices that restore dignity and respect to the faculty, staff and students who have been the targets of systemic racism.
- Following transparent procedures for redressing incidents in which faculty, staff or students perpetrate discrimination, hate and/or bias on campus.
- Continuing to communicate the College’s hate and bias incident reporting system (i.e., Maxient) with safeguards for victims and transparent methods for addressing all reports effectively, ensuring that collected data on incidents is analyzed for the purpose of policy improvements, prevention, and restorative justice.
- Incentivizing departments to target and hire researchers and educators who do critical race, ethnic and gender studies work.

IV. Conclusion.

“The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it.”

~Ibram X. Kendi

The May 25, 2020, video-taped murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, was harsh evidence of the all-too-common indifference to the human value of the lives of Black Americans, and other people of color. Against the backdrop of this killing and the ensuing protests against racism and inequity, the Antiracism Working Group was formed, “responding to the call of the Black Lives Matter movement to reckon with racism...and to commit to being an antiracist institution,” acknowledging that “racism in the United States is systemic.”

From its inception, the Antiracism Working Group has heeded the maxim that it would be unwise to, “allow the urgent to overtake the important,” during such a pivotal time in the College’s history. The board has set forth critical priorities to address challenges posed not only by the

² Chad H. Van Iddekinge et al., [A meta-analysis of the criterion-related validity of prehire work experience](#) (Personnel Psychology, Apr. 4, 2019), referenced by Dr. John Amaechi in the Adam Grant [podcast](#) that was part of the trustees’ ARWG education program.

social justice and equity issues, but also challenges created by the pandemic, the increasing financial difficulties at Mills, and changes in potential academic institutional partnerships.

Utilizing a cross section of resources and tools, the ARWG and the board endeavored to understand the experience of racism on the College campus across student affinity groups, faculty, staff, alumnae, and society at large, to inform its work. What resulted was an enthusiastic new understanding of both systemic racism and individual racism—unconscious and intentional biases—resulting in inequitable policies and practices.

Acknowledging its institutional responsibility and pledged commitment, the College will make diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism central to Mills' mission of social justice, education, and community engagement. We commit to actions that will lead to transformative and sustainable antiracism.

We will accelerate our actions within three critical commitment areas:

1. Equitable systems and inclusive culture: Develop sustainable antiracist organizational structures to drive change and accountability by empowering every operational area of the College to review its practices and culture. Examine the impact of student, faculty, and staff-facing systems and make changes to address inequitable outcomes and systems that negatively impact our Black, Indigenous, and people of color community stakeholders.
2. Talent: Increase the diversity of the College's students, faculty, and staff through recruitment, hiring, and retention of those who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color.
3. Education and training: Identify third-party vendors to provide educational workshops and guidance on how best to support the representation of students, faculty, and staff who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color and those from marginalized communities. The Provost's Office (faculty), Division of Student Life (students), and the Human Resources Department (staff) have already begun antiracist training and planning; as their work matures, engages external experts, and assesses results, it will cross divisions and operational units.

As this report demonstrates, the ARWG has taken the lead in developing and implementing a comprehensive curriculum for the Board of Trustees so that trustees can better understand their role as a governing body in the institutional commitment to antiracism and be able to reflect on their personal understanding of systemic racism and effective engagement with antiracist practices.

Finally, as the academic year concluded—and the College committed to begin talks with Northeastern University to explore an alliance—the ARWG emphasized the importance of centering Mills' commitment to antiracism in its conversations with Northeastern, including the implementation of the proposed Mills Institute. Under the framework of the Institute, the ARWG's antiracism work will continue and expand through focused research and academic programming to deepen the College community's understanding of racism and how social justice and antiracism will be key tenets of a transformative pedagogy and learning, and career development for historically marginalized racial and ethnic communities, and women and gender non-binary individuals.

**Board of Trustees of Mills College
Trustee Antiracism Educational and Training Program
Developed by the Antiracism Working Group
SYLLABUS**

January – June 2021

[Board of Trustees' Commitment to Antiracism](#)

JANUARY 21, 2021, 9:00 am – 10:00 am

PART 1—FULL BOARD

Discussion: *Antiracism: What does it mean for colleges and universities to be antiracist?:* A conversation between [Biddy Martin](#), President of Amherst College and [Brenda Allen](#), President of Lincoln University (HBCU)

Preparation:

- Privilege Questionnaire, a 20-minute exercise to be done ahead of time
- Chapter 2, *Racism and White Supremacy*, (pp. 15-38) and Notes in *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo
- Carol Anderson, Emory University *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Nation's Divide*, <https://youtu.be/YBYUET24K1c> (51 minutes)

JANUARY 28, 2021 ,6:30 – 7:30 PM

JANUARY 30, 2021, 1:00 – 2:00 PM & 3:00 – 4:00 PM

JANUARY 31, 2021, 1:00 – 2:00 PM

PART 2—SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Discussion: Groups of three to four trustees will deepen discussions held at the 1/21 meeting with guest experts.

Preparation: Trustees invited to complete the following activities in advance of the meeting:

- Nikole Hannah-Jones article *What Is Owed*, from the *New York Times* [NikoleHannah-Jones6-24-20](#). To be read for historical framework, rather than for the reparations argument *per se*.
- Terry Gross interview with Nikole Hannah-Jones that aired in June about the *What is Owed* article [FreshAir](#).

FEBRUARY 28, 2021, 6:00 – 7:30 PM

FULL BOARD

Discussion: Trustees are invited to celebrate African American History Month by participating in a watch party of James Baldwin's *I Am Not Your Negro*. The 90-minute documentary is *I Am Not Your Negro* wherein the illustrious writer, James Baldwin, explores racism through the experiences of Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The documentary includes Baldwin's 1965 debate with William F. Buckley, Jr. at Cambridge University. Following the screening, trustees will have a 30-minute discussion on the film.

MARCH 21, 2021, 6:00 – 7:00 PM

FULL BOARD

Discussion: Trustees are invited to celebrate Women's History Month— while we continue to expand our view of the ways Black people traverse the terrain of racial inequality—with a discussion on *Illusions*, a short film from the early 1980's by acclaimed filmmaker, Julie Dash. Trustees will watch the film in advance and then join the board for a discussion facilitated by Trustee Marilyn Schuster.

Illusions, (1982, 35 minutes) is the first film made by Ms. Dash, whose later feature film, *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) won multiple prizes at the Sundance Film Festival. *Illusions* dramatizes the Hollywood film industry in 1942: an African American woman rises to prominence in a movie studio by passing as a white woman. The film exposes the erasure of Black people, and other people of color, in Hollywood and also challenges the viewer to consider the power of popular film to create images and stories that shape our views of history and culture. Richard Brody, in *The New Yorker*, points to Dash's use of "silky, high-contrast black-and-white, [to] infuse the visual repertory of musicals and melodramas with modernist inflections—most powerfully in a scene of vast symbolic impact, set in a sound studio."

APRIL 15, 2021, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

PART 1—FULL BOARD

Discussion: *Antiracism: What is happening at Mills?*: A conversation with members of the Mills Intersectional Antiracism Team:

- Wendi Williams, Dean of the School of Education
- Christie Chung, Esther Lee Mirmow Chair in Psychology and Associate Provost for Recruitment and Student Success
- Alexis Lopez, Assistant Dean for Retention, Equity and Inclusion

Preparation:

- Introduction (pp. 3-11) to *How to Be An Antiracist*, by Ibram X. Kendi
- Review webpages: [Mills College Intersectional Antiracism Team](#)

APRIL 18, 2021, 6:00 – 7:00 PM

APRIL 20, 2021, 6:00 – 7:00 PM

PART 2—SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Discussion: Groups of three to four trustees will deepen discussions held at the 4/15 meeting with guest experts. Each group will be “facilitated” by two ARWG members.

Preparation:

- Ibram X. Kendi panel at Berkeley from November 2019, [KendiatUCBNov2019](#), excerpt. The event is two hours long, Kendi speaks for first 43 minutes. If you don't have time for the full recording, we are suggesting that you begin at 43 minutes for the panel discussion that includes:
- Chapter 2 (pp. 22-30) from *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019*, edited by Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain
 - *A Community of Souls: An Introduction*, by Ibram X. Kendi
 - *1619-1624: 'Arrival,'* by Nikole Hannah-Jones

MAY 14, 2021, 9:30 – 10:30 AM

PART 1—FULL BOARD

Discussion: *Anti-Black Racism and the Mental Health of Black Students and Other Students of Color: Toward an Understanding of the Impacts of Micro-Aggressions Within the Campus*

Community: A conversation with Denise Herd, Associate Director, Othering and Belonging Institute, University of California at Berkeley, and Wendi Williams, Dean of the School of Education, Mills College.

Preparation:

- *Wellness Package for Black Students: Addressing Racially Informed Trauma*, by Mills College students, Jessica Hairston, Dilyn Turner-Keener and Ashlee Davis, 2020 (6 pages)
- Recognizing Microaggressions (1 page)
- *Racial Microaggressions and Psychological Distress Among Undergraduate College Students of Color: Implications for Social Work Practice*, by Ada Robinson-Perez, Miesha Marzell, and Woojae Han (8 pages)
- *Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students*, by Daniel Solorzano, University of California-Los Angeles; Miguel Ceja, University of California-Davis; and Tara Yosso, University of California Santa Barbara (14 pages)

Additional recommended resources (optional):

- *Combating Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy in Organizations: Recommendations for Anti-Racist Actions in Mental Healthcare*, prepared by Babe Kawaii-Bogue (49 pages)
- [I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness](#), by Austin Channing Brown

- [Video: Austin Channing Brown on the question *Why I wrote 'I'm Still Here'* and with a panel response to her work for a "conversational lecture"](#)

MAY 16, 2021, 6:00 – 7:00 PM

MAY 18, 2021, 6:00 – 7:00 PM

PART 2—SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Discussion: Groups of three to four trustees will deepen discussions held at the 5/14 meeting with guest experts. Each group will be “facilitated” by two ARWG members.

JUNE 17, 2021, 10:00 – 10:45 AM

PART 1—FULL BOARD

Discussion: *Antiracism and Institutional Responsibility*: A conversation between Trustee Debi Wood and Interim Provost and VP of Academic Affairs Patricia Hardaway.

Preparation:

- *It Takes a Community to Educate Students*, by Ursula Wagener and Michael T. Nettles, in *Change*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr., 1998)
- [Racism has a cost for everyone, TED Podcast w/ author Heather C. McGhee](#)
- [Building an Anti-Racist Workplace, WorkLife with Adam Grant \(podcast\)](#)
- Optional recommended reading: *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, by Heather McGhee

JUNE 22, 2021, 6:00 – 7:00 PM

JUNE 23, 2021, 6:00 – 7:00 PM

PART 2—SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Discussion: Considering the various conversations we have engaged in, as well as our reading, listening, and viewing, we would like to address these questions:

- We invite you to reflect on what the board’s commitment to antiracism asks of trustees and the College, and evaluate what has been done institutionally and personally.
- How can we, as trustees, ensure the continuation of Mills’ commitment to antiracism/racial and gender justice within the proposed Mills Institute, as it may be configured?