

**From:** [Campus Climate Proposal form](#)  
**To:** [Libby Peterek](#); [Carrie Olson](#)  
**Subject:** New submission from Campus Climate Proposals  
**Date:** Thursday, April 21, 2016 5:28:48 PM

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**What is your affiliation with UW-Madison? For group submissions, please respond for main contact.**

- Academic Staff

**Describe the concept. If already in use here or elsewhere, please indicate this.**

This program will provide a place for white-identified individuals, and any others who wish to join, to take a closer look at how white identity, white privilege and white supremacy intersects with University systems to perpetuate a non-inclusive campus environment. Facilitated groups would meet regularly in an open, non-hierarchical, non-status-seeking space.

Though many diversity initiatives are staffed and run by people of color, most (some would say all) racist behavior comes from white people. A recent tweet on #theRealUW points out the burden placed on students of color to educate their colleagues about racism (“#theRealUW is wanting the same tuition from all students, yet expecting minorities to teach impromptu crash courses on racism free of charge”). We would like to help shift that burden of education to white members of the University community.

This program is modeled on the successful 2014 & 2015 semester-long sessions of the Climate Knowledge Project, which were in turn modeled on the SEED program run by UW’s Leadership Institute and from discussions with Seema Kapani and Will Clifton.

The program fits in well with the Campus Diversity Framework Goal #1: “Promoting shared values” and “Support and expand experiential and participatory learning programs.. and foster ongoing local opportunities for learning, reflection and practice...”

**How would this affect cultural change on campus?**

This project emphasizes the simultaneous creation of individual and collective understandings around whiteness and race and puts this together with the power of community building. Though there are white racial justice workers offering this kind of programming in the greater Madison community, we are unaware of any kind of specifically anti-racism programs focused on the concept of whiteness for students and staff on campus. The Leadership Institute, which has provided an exceptional model for transformational change, does effective work in this area but is not able to consistently provide this kind of opportunity. We think putting white people together to talk about race in a courageous place, will have appeal. We think it is worth a try.

In essence, we would be cultivating leadership around sharpened racial perspectives by and about white people on our campus and creating a community of engaged individuals who may not normally interact

with each other. What comes from this kind of engaged community? The nature of this kind of organic learning in a mixed-community format is that it is unpredictable. However, one outcome can be information about how this type of educational format works to understand and facilitate cultural change. In addition, this program would support diversity work in many areas of the university, and provide a meeting place for unexpected combinations of programs and personnel, and for those in otherwise isolated areas.

Some issues:

We realize that suggesting that group members focus on whiteness is problematic in many ways. We would need to undertake discussion in order to resolve this issue in a way that is acceptable to members of all identity communities. That can be seen as the first piece of important work done by the program.

It cannot be emphasized enough that such a program will only work if it is located in an emotional and intellectual space free from hierarchy, status and evaluation -- a rare commodity on this campus. Such spaces can engender a different kind of learning, which can be transformative rather than simply add knowledge. Such an orientation is crucial here.

There is the question of recruitment. How could such a program reach people who might not realize they would benefit from it? The answer may be a combination of strategies: word of mouth; targeted email lists; faculty offering extra credit to student participants; departments making the opportunity freely available both to Academic and University staff. I will say that recruitment was never a problem for the Climate Knowledge Project; in its second semester, the program filled up in three days. We believe it is likely that there are more people interested in exploring race than global climate change on campus. Now is the time to engage them.

**For new ideas, how would you propose piloting this idea to see if it would work? If the idea is already in use at UW-Madison, how would you propose expanding or altering this program for greater impact?**

We propose to convene six or seven groups composed of 8-10 members coming from all areas of the University – students, staff, faculty and administrators. There would be no credit offered to students, but food would be served at each meeting, provided by the program. Members would meet once a week for one semester, with the option of continuing through the year, if desired. Members would be asked to read and view materials prior to each meeting. The groups would be facilitated by participant-facilitators, and all members would undergo some training in facilitation in the early months. There would be no formal assessment but members would be asked to take attitude and behavior surveys prior to the start of the sessions and upon completion.

**What resources would be needed to implement your suggestion?**

An hourly or part-time coordinator would need to set up infrastructure (reading/viewing materials, room reservations, food), and administer ongoing activities. Budget items would also include costs associated with providing food.

**If this proposal was developed in partnership with any other organizations, please list them below.**

This proposal owes thanks for all the input given by various UW communities. Unfortunately, it was written too late for formal support.

**Please use this space for any additional information about your proposal that you wish to share:**

Thank you for your consideration.