

# LIFT STUDENTS' VOICES

**Shaun Leflore & Dominique Hitchcock**

Racial Justice Task Force

Workgroup A

2020/21

# Background

- Key to our work was **exploring, documenting, and addressing forms of anti-Blackness on campus**. Part of our learning process was **eliciting feedback from our Black/AA students** through surveys and interviews
- **In Fall 2020, we conducted a survey** to collect quantitative data on the experiences of Black/ AA Students at Norco College. Various themes emerged
  - **Experiencing racism with other students, professors, policy, and campus staff**
  - **Documenting negative experiences in the classroom and with counselors**
  - **Being othered and heavying to carry the weight of their “Blackness” on campus**
- **We then held conversations** with Black/ AA students to gain deeper insight and work to uncover practices/structures on campus that contribute towards anti-Black experiences

# What were our goals and How we proceeded:

- We collected **quantitative** data from Black/ AA Norco College students regarding their experience at Norco College (Fall 2020)
- We collected **qualitative** data from Black/ AA NC students regarding their experience at Norco College (Spring 2021)

**We conducted 9 individual student interviews (Phone/ Zoom)**

and asked 6 questions around three areas:

- **Experiences in Academic Spaces**
- **Discrimination, Sense of Belonging & Campus Racial Climate**
- **Recommendations to create an Inclusive Campus Environment**

# Experiences in Academic Spaces

Surveying the Experiences of Black Students at Norco College

## Experiences in Academic Spaces (Classrooms, Labs, faculty offices)

### **QUESTION 1**

The survey results indicate that in-class experience for Black/AA students can range from welcoming to traumatic, due to faculty's and/or students' behavior.

**We asked:**

**Can you talk about a time when you were supported or not supported by a faculty member, both in and out the classroom at Norco?**

# Experiences in Academic Spaces QUESTION 1

## STUDENT Positive Feedback

- **Supportive Faculty:** understanding, able to listen, including non-Black faculty

*“The professors are supportive. And they understand where I am coming from.”*

- **UMOJA:** A successful experience

*“I can definitely say the counselor with Umoja and all the professors are definitely helpful.”*

*“All of the professors, including the non-Black ones.”*

# Experiences in Academic Spaces QUESTION 1

## STUDENT Negative Feedback

### Classroom Experiences

- **Classroom experience**
  - Name ignored, mispronounced, called by the wrong name
  - Ignored when raising hand or asking for help
  - Treated differently from other students
  - Targeted to answer all 'Black-related' questions
- **Honors Classes**
  - Black Culture is pathologized
  - Feeling disconnected

### Broader Campus Environment

- **Counseling**
  - Discouraged from joining Umoja
  - Negative connotation expressed regarding Umoja
- **On Campus**
  - Feeling of loneliness
  - Uncomfortable in surroundings because of the lack of Black students

# Experiences in Academic Spaces QUESTION 1

## GROUP A RECOMMENDATIONS

- Offer **ongoing professional development** opportunities for faculty to develop and/ grow cultural competence and sensibility
- **Honor's Program:**
  - Collect/ analyze disaggregated data
  - Intentional Outreach to Black / AA students (college and high school)
  - Cultural competency orientation (for students and college employees)
- Create an **intentionally welcoming culture for Black/ AA students** at NC
- Educate faculty and counselors on the importance in participating to groups and programs, such as Umoja, where students can strive from being supported in a culturally relevant environment



Experiences in Academic Spaces  
(Classrooms, Labs, faculty offices)

**QUESTION 2**

**Questions Asked**

- **What has been your best in-class experience at NC and why?**
- **How important is it to you that your instructors be Black/ AA, and why?**

# Experiences in Academic Spaces QUESTION 2

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

### Black Faculty Important

- Relate more to students' experience
- Best experience is with Black professors
- Different experience when faculty looks like you: they understand because they have gone through it too
- Comforting and welcoming, and understanding
- Great allies
- Curriculum is structured around Black experiences

### Black Faculty not Important

- Not important at all. Faculty needs to be competent and non-biased

# Experiences in Academic Spaces QUESTION2

## GROUP A RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Attract, Hire and support** more Black/ AA faculty
- Non-Black/ AA faculty to ‘reproduce and adopt’ the care provided by Black/ AA faculty through **faculty to faculty conversations** and supportive professional development
- Faculty to **Assess personal biases**
- **Complete CORA courses:** Microaggressions; Teaching Men of Color; Black Minds Matter, for instance
- **Create and Revise curriculum** to make it culturally relevant, respectful, and inclusive

# Discrimination, Sense of Belonging & Campus Racial Climate

# Discrimination, Sense of belonging and Campus Racial Climate QUESTION 3

## **We Asked:**

- **If you witnessed an act of racial discrimination and wanted to report it, what would you do?**

(If students answered “I don’t know what I would do.”, we asked “What kind of processes or support would you like to see in place at Norco College?”)

## Discrimination, Sense of belonging & Campus Racial Climate QUESTION 3 **STUDENT FEEDBACK**

- Majority of students would report incidents of racial discrimination **but do not know how or to whom report**
- Students would chose to tell someone of authority **they know and trust**
- The grievance process must be clarified.
- **Students ask for a Change in Culture:**
  - supportive & welcoming of students reporting incidents
  - Take students seriously
  - clearly state that discrimination is not acceptable on our campus.
  - establish a network of trusted college employees to go to and get support from
  - offer community-building activities that will build trust in campus police

Discrimination, Sense of belonging  
& Campus Racial Climate QUESTION 3  
**GROUP A RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Bi-annual Climate Survey** (Fall and Spring) to assess frequency of discrimination instances and student's needs
- **Establish a clear and accessible process to report discrimination:**
  - link information and forms to NC Homepage (Visible icon)
  - video to describe the grievance process
  - campaign to highlight the college's stance on discrimination
  - create a Welcome Center for students to have access a Social Justice Ally and provide face to face or virtual support.

Discrimination, Sense of belonging  
and Campus Racial Climate  
**QUESTION 3**

**We asked:**

**Many students do not complete their college goals and drop for a variety of reasons.**

**What can Norco College do to help students reach their goals and feel sense of belonging?**



# Discrimination, Sense of belonging and Campus Racial Climate QUESTION 4

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

### Students drop classes because of:

- family
- jobs
- security
- lack of childcare
- lack of support and personal outreach
- lack of guidance (academic, personal, career, special programs, basic needs)

### NC should not leave support/ information-seeking up to students

- promote Special Programs and resources such as Umoja and EOPS.
- **counseling**: create personalized connections & relationships to make sure students are on track academically and mentally.
- **faculty**: promote tutoring and academic support
- **create an inviting and welcoming culture** that makes all students feel that they belong.
- Foster an environment where all are **seen, heard, and understood**
- **create an outreach program** to follow up with at-risk students, student parents, or others who have stopped attending (classes or the college) to see what can be done to help or bring them back.

## Discrimination, Sense of belonging and Campus Racial Climate QUESTION 4 GROUP A RECOMMENDATIONS

- set up a team/ network to create intrusive & personal connections and a sense of community for students outside of Special Programs
- promote & inform on campus resources and equity-supported programs
- adopt a culturally inclusive curriculum
- address students' lack of attendance and academic decline systematically by contacting students directly and providing continued follow up.
- create and fund a broader campus peer-mentoring program

# Recommendations to Create an Inclusive Campus Environment

# Recommendations from Students on Creating an Inclusive Campus Environment

## QUESTION 5

**We asked:**

**Given the ongoing failures of society when it comes to integrating all cultures on college campuses, how would you like to see Norco College change to create a more inclusive campus environment that reflects your own culture/personal identity?**

## Recommendations from Students on creating an Inclusive Campus Environment QUESTION 6 **STUDENT FEEDBACK**

- **Students would like:**
  - more connection with administration, staff & faculty
  - mental health checkups
  - more representation of Black/ AA culture on campus in various forms and activities
  - A designated safe space where Black/ AA students' culture is nurtured and thriving
- Students also noted the **distinction between creating a culture of inclusivity** and the **damaging effects of an “all-inclusive” attitude to culture.**

Recommendations from Students on creating an  
Inclusive Campus Environment QUESTION 6  
**GROUP A RECOMMENDATIONS**

- display positive, inclusive and celebrative visuals such as murals and messages on campus and college website (e.g. NC marquee, NC Art Gallery, NC website, sandwich board signs along the Palm Pathway, Social Media).
- establish a Black Ally Program
- attract, hire and support more Black/ AA faculty
- offer ongoing professional development opportunities to foster and grow culturally relevant pedagogy

# Recommendations from Students on creating an Inclusive Campus Environment

## Question 6

### **We asked:**

- **If you attended Norco prior to the COVID-19 semester (Spring 2020), what was it like to be a Black/African American student on our campus?**
- **If you were giving an in-person tour to a Black/African American student who was considering attending Norco, what would you say to them to help them have the best experience possible as a future Norco student? What would you highlight? What advice would you give?**

# Recommendations from Students on creating an Inclusive Campus Environment QUESTION 6 **STUDENT FEEDBACK**

- Students feel isolated, unsafe, unseen and uncomfortable in various ways
- Students need to know about the work currently done on their behalf.
- Students would like:
  - clear and accessible information about the campus
  - more diversity in student population faculty
  - events that highlight their cultural backgrounds and narratives



# Recommendations from Students on creating an Inclusive Campus Environment QUESTION 6 GROUP A RECOMMENDATIONS

- provide accessible on-line and printed Campus Maps
- schedule in-person orientation for first time Black/ AA students
- create a peer Mentor programs for first time Black/ AA students
- Promote and support special programs like UMOJA
- Sponsor Black/ AA cultural events (food, essay competitions and publications to highlight cultural backgrounds and student narratives)

# RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE 2021-22

- Focused on Black/AA students and employees
  - College Environment
  - Advocacy
  - 10-Point plan for addressing Anti-Blackness
- 2021-22 Direction
  - Implementing the recommendations gathered in 20/21
  - 4 Project Teams

# RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE - SUMMER 2021

- CORA Trainings
  - *CORA Teaching Men of Color at the Community College*
  - *CORA Racial Microaggressions*
  - *CORA Black Minds Matter*
  - *CORA Black Ally*
- Resources
  - Norco Library LIBGUIDE
  - Films and Documentaries
- Summer Workgroup
  - Charters
  - Project Teams

# RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE - FALL 2021

- Project Teams
  1. Black Student Care
  2. Cultural Competency/Individual and Institutional Commitment
  3. Classroom and Campus Experiences
  4. Celebration
- Next Steps
  - Finalize Project Teams Charters
  - Membership