



WOMEN'S FACULTY COUNCIL

Addressing Inclusion and Accessibility in Higher Education: A Statement from Women's Faculty Council Leadership

Inspired by current events that have spotlighted issues of systemic racism and inequality towards Black lives, Women's Faculty Council (WFC) leadership would like to express our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equality of access for all Black women, Indigenous women, and Women of Color (BIWOC), especially in higher education. We acknowledge that the movement for Black lives is, necessarily, a gender issue, and thus an area in which we can put our commitments into our future actions.

Research and experience indicate that BIWOC scholars are faced with several issues and challenges in higher education, and that these issues limit accessibility, representation, and opportunities available to them as students and/or scholars. These issues include (but are not limited to):

- the insidious, often coded ways that racialized gender bias can permeate hiring, tenure, and promotion committees in higher education, contributing to the underrepresentation of BIWOC in tenure-track and tenured faculty positions;
- the institutional marginalization of gender and sexuality studies, African and African American studies, Indigenous studies, Latinx studies, and Asian and Asian American studies, among other areas, that contribute to broadening students' and the public's understandings of the issues facing BIWOC communities and BIWOC leadership to address these issues;
- the ways in which BIWOC faculty are often "presumed incompetent" as researchers and teachers in relation to their white, cis-male peers by white students, colleagues, and administrators;
- the additional, often overwhelming, diversity service labor that BIWOC faculty and students tend to contribute to university campuses; and
- the additional emotional labor that BIWOC faculty and students tend to take on in predominantly white institutions as they navigate everyday racialized microaggressions and offer havens of support for BIWOC students.

In the upcoming academic year, WFC will focus on issues of diversity, inclusion, and accessibility as related to BIWOC and to higher education in general. Our plan is to present speakers and programming that will:

- explore inequalities experienced by BIWOC, and strategies to combat, manage, and advocate against issues that limit inclusion and accessibility in professional and higher education spaces;

- center and deepen the WFC community's understandings of how intersections of gender, race, and class shape the experiences and challenges of women, including trans and queer women and gender non-conforming faculty at OSU; and
- advocate for institutional policies and practices that center these experiences and perspectives.

Recent examples of WFC's efforts along the lines of the latter item include: successfully advocating for an [automatic one-year tenure clock extension](#) for all tenure track faculty, and working with staff, student, and faculty organizations across campus to put forward a set of [guidelines for administrators to implement caregiver-friendly policies](#) and practices in the upcoming academic year.

Please join us in these efforts! If you have specific ideas for topics, speakers and/or institutional policies and practices for which you think WFC should advocate, please email WFC Secretary Madison Chartier (madison.chartier@okstate.edu) or any other members of the Executive Committee.

Finally, we are dedicated to doing the work to grow as an organization in ways that center the perspectives of women and gender-non-conforming people who have historically been most marginalized in higher education. Toward these ends, we humbly welcome critique of our efforts.