

# ENCOMPASS

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS ■ UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
NEWSLETTER FOR EQUITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE



## Welcome from the COLA Dean

BY MICHELE DILLON, PH.D.

I'm very pleased that the College of Liberal Arts (COLA) is instituting a digital newsletter to provide updates on our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives to our many stakeholders – students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors and the community at large. Aptly named Encompass, this newsletter amplifies our college's deep commitment to DEI values and to ensuring that our curricular, co-curricular, research and service activities will be effective in advancing and realizing those values both on campus and in the many sectors of society to which our students will be contributing in multiple, impactful ways across the course of their lives. Encompass is under the aegis of the college's inaugural faculty fellow for equity and inclusion, Professor Kabria Baumgartner.

### IN THIS EDITION

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"I can't breathe:" Lessons on Racism, COVID-19 and the Reality of Death	3
"We the People" Theatrical Performance	4
Inclusive Syllabi Design	5
Alumna Profile	6
Announcements	7

*(continued on pg. 2)*

# Welcome...

One of the great strengths of our college is that for several years we have been offering an array of courses and co-curricular opportunities – across the humanities, the arts and the social sciences – whose themes variously engage with racial inequality and social justice. And many of our faculty conduct award-winning scholarship and artistry that illuminate these issues even as they also nudge awareness of the persistent stubbornness of the structural and cultural impediments to creating a more inclusive, participative society. The events, workshops and activities reported here will alert you to some of the ways in which we are expanding the college's teaching and research opportunities around racial justice, initiatives in particular that emphasize the collaborative nature of learning. It is through such collaborative practices that we learn to

respect each other and the differences that enrich our mutual humanity. The task of creating more inclusive institutions and societies is daunting – histories, social scientific analyses and literary narratives remind us of the many crisscrossing fissures that cry out for repair. I believe that our commitment to change, if strategically harnessed to resources, can make progress. And my belief is energized by the words of the late cultural theorist Stuart Hall. He notes that identity is “a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past.” Therefore, while we cannot and should not erase the past, we have the collective power to transform legacies of exclusion in ways that will enable us to become more inclusive in our institutional identities and everyday practices.



"While we cannot and should not erase the past, we have the collective power to transform legacies of exclusion in ways that will enable us to become more inclusive in our institutional identities and everyday practices."

— MICHELE DILLON  
*DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS*

# "I can't breathe:" Lessons on Racism, COVID-19 and the Reality of Death

BY LANEY MELDRUM '22

Institutionalized racism has played a major role in the spread of COVID-19, according to a panel hosted by the Women's and Gender Studies Department.

One of the panelists, Mike Alvarez, a postdoctoral diversity and innovation scholar in UNH's Department of Communication, discussed "yellow peril," which he defined as the association of Asians with disease or impurity. He said that Pacific Islanders, a vulnerable population that makes up a large number of healthcare workers, face added risk factors like health disparities and a greater wage gap. Filipinos make up 1% of the population of the U.S. but 7% of the hospital workforce and are twice as likely to die in the U.S. than in the Philippines.

The second panelist, Gyuri Kepes, assistant professor at Landmark College, discussed the Black Lives Matter movement and the concept of "ocularcentrism," which is the simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility of Black lives. Uttered by George Floyd in his last moments, "I can't breathe" became a symbol of violence against Black people. Kepes compared the imagery of Black optimism, the affirmation of Black joy even in the face of death, with white despair, the transposition of the language of Black struggle onto white perceived slights

– for example, the appropriation of "I can't breathe" by the anti-mask movement.

Culture and communications expert Carmen Hernández-Ojeda talked about the disregard for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) and the elderly as the virus ripped through global markets. In April 2020, Texas politician Dan Patrick defended his refusal to shut down the economy by saying that there are "more important things than living and that's saving this country." Hernández-Ojeda also said that while tourism was proven to be the main cause of the virus's spread to Europe, wealthy European tourists will never take the blame in our society.

This talk provided context to begin to understand this pandemic while also eliciting discussion and reflection. The pandemic has struck at a time of American reckoning with racism, classism and political tension. As the panelists argued, this tragedy has been exacerbated by racist and unjust systems that have been decades in the making.

*Laney Meldrum '22 is a third-year undergraduate student pursuing a double major in journalism, and women's and gender studies.*

# "We the People" Performance

BY ADAM SCHOENE, PH.D.

From October 7-11, 2020, an engaged audience in and beyond the university attended the "We the People" performance in person at Paul Creative Arts Center and virtually. Written by and featuring UNH students and directed by Raina Ames, professor and chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at UNH, "We the People" tackled difficult but important questions about current social justice issues and our global responsibility to address them. The performance aimed to inspire both individual action as well as collective discussion and engagement.

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, UNH students contacted faculty to organize meetings to address racism and violence nationally and locally. The performance emerged as a response to these discussions, and it was also envisioned in part to recognize and address different forms of bias; confront anti-Black violence; and identify and condemn racism in theatre and performing arts practices.

The students involved in this performance also sought to examine racism along with issues of gender and sexuality. One student, who identifies as a transgender person of color, drew from their lived experiences to write parts of the script. The Beauregard Center and the Carsey School of Public Policy staff helped frame



"We the People" was structured as a series of vignettes around social justice issues.

ways to talk about these issues, as did David Kaye, professor of theatre and dance, who has a rich background in social justice theatre. UNH's Civil Discourse Lab moderated a post-performance discussion as well. "We the People" employed a hybrid medium in a powerful way to address some of the most pressing issues of our time.

*Adam Schoene is adjunct faculty in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at UNH.*

# Inclusive Syllabi Design

BY KABRIA BAUMGARTNER, PH.D.



On November 10, 2020, COLA hosted an online faculty workshop on developing inclusive syllabi. The workshop was led by Yvette DeChavez, a Latinx writer, artist and assistant professor at Huston-Tillotson University, a historically Black university in Austin, Texas.

The workshop opened with an introduction from Professor DeChavez and an overview of her research in anti-colonial and anti-racist pedagogy in U.S. higher education. Her introduction was followed by a breakout session where 35 faculty participants from various colleges at UNH discussed some of the rules, spoken and unspoken, of creating syllabi.

Oftentimes a syllabus is regarded as a contract between faculty and students, but Professor DeChavez challenged that view. "[The syllabus] has a lot of power in our classroom, [shaping] how we teach. When we develop our syllabi, we're talking about how we're interacting with our students, how we're teaching in general, and what we're asking of our students while they're in our space."

Professor DeChavez's workshop also explored the difference between a diverse syllabus, which focuses on adding texts written by scholars of color, and an anti-

racist syllabus, which stresses "actively working against what we know is harmful" like racism and colonialism.

Professor DeChavez asked faculty participants to ponder a range of questions as they develop or revise their syllabi, including: How does your discipline benefit from racism and colonialism, and how can you confront this in the classroom? What types of knowledge and research are considered important and who decides this?

The workshop provided some concrete suggestions, too. For instance, faculty should integrate the work of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) scholars in their field. Faculty should invite (and compensate) guest speakers to present on their research. And students should be encouraged to attend campus events that promote awareness about race, gender, sexuality and other identity categories.

Given the positive reception to this workshop, subsequent opportunities will be made available to help faculty enhance their teaching effectiveness.

*Kabria Baumgartner is associate professor of American studies in the Department of English at UNH.*

# Alumna Profile: Stephanie Yee '16

BY LANEY MELDRUM '22



Alumna Stephanie Yee '16 arrived at UNH as a theatre major, but graduated with a degree in psychology. Her most rewarding college experiences were getting involved, doing research and giving back, according to a talk she gave to the COLA Dean's Development Board in 2016.

When she arrived on campus, she found a community through the CONNECT program and the Rising Scholars program, which serve both underrepresented and first-generation students. Joining social justice theatre troupe WildActs and multicultural sorority Delta Xi Phi connected her with peers who shared her interests and values. She also attended the Audre Lorde Summit, formerly known as the MLK Summit, a social justice leadership retreat that helped her explore her identities and understand the experiences of others.

Taking psychology courses prompted Yee to switch her major from theatre and dance to psychology. "I have always loved people and been intrigued by what motivates behaviors and influences the way in which we think," she told the Dean's Development Board. Since psychology is one of the largest programs at UNH, she wanted to stand out by doing research. She researched gratitude, bullying prevention and racial bias, and presented her work as part of the McNair Scholars Program.

Now Yee is a 5th year Ph.D. candidate in counseling psychology at the University of Maryland. "As a college instructor, I model vulnerability by sharing my experiences with my own various intersecting identities because I believe this encourages students to engage in the classroom at a deeper level and reflect on their own identities," she says. She hopes to provide multiculturally competent counseling to clients from marginalized backgrounds.

She recommends that students who want to bring social justice into their future careers should be culturally humble, open minded and self-aware about their own identities and biases. She says it's important to research how inequity is institutionalized. "For example, my field has historically perpetuated racism and heterosexism in various ways, which can cause mistrust among Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) or LGBTQ+ clients," Yee says. She writes [a blog on race and social media](#).



# Announcements

The New Hampshire Humanities Collaborative (NHHC) is offering a number of small grants to UNH and Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH) faculty to support its mission to advance racial and social justice, support the transfer of community college students in the humanities to UNH, develop a humanities curriculum linking different educational institutions and regions, and promote the humanities across the state. Grant workshops and collaborations will occur at the NHHC Winter Academy on January 29, 2021. The NHHC is funded by a Mellon Foundation grant to the College of Liberal Arts and CCSNH.

Possible projects can take a variety of forms, including but not limited to:

- Archival work
- Community research and engagement
- Course collaborations / curricular development
- Documentary
- Student outreach, recruitment, support and transfer
- Public outreach / presentation
- Academic or popular publication

Send notifications of interest, final submissions and questions to:

Paul Robertson, Paul.Robertson@unh.edu, NHHC Project Manager at UNH

Leslie Barber, LBarber@ccsnh.edu, NHHC Project Manager at CCSNH

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In Spring 2019, Dean Michele Dillon established the Social Justice-Diversity Working Group, consisting of four faculty members: Anna Wainwright, who chaired the committee; David Kaye; Jason Sokol and Lin Zhang. In consultation with Dean Dillon, they researched and spoke with faculty, students and staff about the COLA curriculum and faculty hiring and retention. The now-renamed 2020-2021 Committee on Equity, Inclusion and Justice has seven members including three of the aforementioned faculty (except for Lin Zhang, who is on research leave this academic year) along with Islam Karkour, Alecia Magnifico and Adam Schoene; a student representative, Julian Maduro, who is a senior double majoring in English and justice studies; and Kabria Baumgartner serving as chair. We welcome feedback from faculty, students, staff, alumni and community members about our ongoing DEI initiatives.



# University of New Hampshire

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We're happy to feature DEI-related alumni news, departmental events and announcements in Encompass. Please send your updates to Kabria Baumgartner at: [kabria.baumgartner@unh.edu](mailto:kabria.baumgartner@unh.edu).



Bethany Cooper '18 presents at the 2017 McNair Scholars Program Poster Presentation.

### **We appreciate our donors.**

We wouldn't be able to pursue new DEI initiatives nor continue our current work without your support. Check out COLA's DEI website [here!](#)

Donations can be made simply by clicking this [link](#).

This digital newsletter is published in the fall and spring semesters. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily representative of the University of New Hampshire.