



## MINUTES OF THE JOINT SENATE & COUNCIL WEBINAR

Held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (held virtually)

### Plans to tackle racism and to advance race equality at Keele

#### Introduction

The Chairs of Council and Senate welcomed members to the session and emphasised that this already crucially important agenda was brought into sharper focus over the summer with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Members had received in advance of the session a briefing paper from Professor Shane O'Neill (Co-Chair of the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team) and Rachel Adams (Director of HR) and an article recently published in the THE on race inequality and the need for greater inclusiveness in the classroom by Keele academics, Dr Mariangela Palladino and Dr Shalini Sharma.

It was noted that Keele had been recognised in the sector for its work in this area but that there was a significant amount of work still to be done.

#### Rachel Adams, Director of HR – Advancing Race Equality & Black Lives Matter

The Director of HR presented on advancing race equality and supporting the Black Lives Matter movement at Keele. The key elements of her presentation were as follows:

- It was noted that Keele was one of only 17 institutions to be awarded Advance HE's Race Equality Charter bronze award and this helped to galvanise our efforts and have a framework to work to.
- Images and a video were shared of the Forest of Light installation, which was lit up in purple in June to remember George Floyd. Members of the Keele community held a vigil and continued to do so each week. These materials had been provided by Dr Jane Krishnadas in the School of Law who had coordinated the vigils
- Images were shared of an outdoor art exhibition "Strong British and Black" which was projected on to the Chapel during Black History Month in October.
- A Black is Beautiful Festival had been held at Keele, which celebrated black history and culture, a large part of which had been organised by the KPA's Equality & Diversity Officer.
- Recognition of frustrations across the sector regarding the slow pace of change in addressing inequalities with respect to race
- Recognition that representation is important and an aspiration to address the lack of ethnic diversity on UEC but alongside that the lack of ethnic diversity amongst the professoriate in the sector, which forms the talent pipeline, (less than 10% of profs from BAME background, just 0,2% are black women).
- The need to build confidence in the University's leaders in supporting and advancing race equality and challenging and removing inequality. The scale of the challenge was daunting and some staff would

inevitably be questioning their ability to make a real difference and some would be paralysed by a concern about doing or saying the wrong thing. In order to address this, the University proposed high quality allyship training starting with Council and UEC, our Equality Leads and those in formal leadership roles, such as Heads of Schools.

- The necessity to continually listen to BAME students and colleagues.
- The need to develop a good understanding of the roots of racism and race-based inequalities and to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards racism to eliminate both overt racist behaviour and less overt behaviour.
- The need for the University's leaders to be brave and to make a positive difference.

Professor David Richardson, Vice-Chancellor at the University of East Anglia and Chair of the Universities UK group developing guidance on Tackling Racial Harassment

Professor Richardson presented on racial harassment and institutional racism in higher education.

He commended Keele on achieving the Race Equality Charter bronze award.

His presentation focused on the following three key points:

- Accept there was a problem – His starting point was to acknowledge that institutional racism existed and that there were systemic issues in our universities. Working closely with students as partners was critical. UUK's research showed that, unfortunately the same level of priority on tackling some forms of harassment, such as sexual harassment, had not been afforded to racial harassment to date. He committed to take action to lead change from the very top of his organisation and that, quite rightly, BAME students and staff wanted actions and not words.
- The UUK Advisory Group – Professor Richardson noted that we did not need to collect more evidence that all universities were systematically racist. Repeatedly asking BAME students and staff to tell their stories and to capture their experiences before instigating action only served to re-traumatise them and to cause delays. The UUK Advisory Group guidance would be published the following week and took a problem focused, action-oriented approach supported by case studies.
- Wider actions – He noted that it was important to recognise that efforts to address racial harassment in isolation were not enough. Leaders must focus on a range of concrete activities, including addressing ethnicity pay gaps, increasing representation, tackling degree awarding gaps and embracing decolonisation. It was a problem of the whole University community and so the whole University community must own the challenge together, led by the Vice-Chancellor.
- The UUK report would be making recommendations to the sector structured around the following 10 areas:
  - Visible and meaningful senior leadership
  - Incorporating voices of lived experience
  - Developing an institution-wide strategy for tackling racial harassment
  - Increasing understanding of racial harassment and its impacts throughout the university
  - Defining terminology and creating a common understanding of racial harassment
  - Increasing understanding of racism and racial harassment from an anti-racist perspective
  - Addressing racial harassment online
  - Developing reporting systems
  - Collecting and analysing data on reporting
  - Evaluation measures to drive continuous improvement
- Professor Richardson noted that there needed to be a fast pace of change in turning actions into words on all forms of racism, including racial harassment and discrimination in our institutions.

Members of Council, Senate and UEC actively contributed to the discussion, including officers from the Students' Union, the Equality & Diversity Leads from the Faculties, a Dean of Research and a member of the Education Committee.

During the discussion, Professor Richardson encouraged members to be brave, open and transparent, to support the Vice-Chancellor and to ensure the University had excellent reporting and supporting systems in place. He advised that we should not be concerned if we see an increased number of reports on racist incidents since this means that people feel it is safe to speak up and we will be in a better position to take targeted action

Members thanked Professor Richardson for his honest and inspirational presentation and extended an invitation for him to visit campus when it was safe to do so.

#### Hinna Sheikh, Race Equality Officer & Nicola Ratcliffe, Head of HR (Strategy & Policy) – Race Equality at Keele

The Race Equality Officer and Head of HR (Strategy & Policy) presented on race equality at Keele, including the following:

- a very wide range of current, recent and future race equality initiatives
- A video clip 'An everyday dimension of racism: why we need to understand microaggressions', which focused on a group of Keele students talking about their experiences.
- Setting out next steps/actions including the University's work on decolonising the curriculum, a comprehensive programme of training and the introduction on an anonymous reporting tool to enable individuals to report racist incidents whether overt or covert.
- A short reflection exercise that members took part in to consider their privilege.
- Provided a list of resources and further reading.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Director of HR for her leadership in this area and being the driving force behind the agenda.

The Chair of Council thanked everyone for attending and contributing to what had been a truly inspirational session. She noted the importance of members of the Keele community having the confidence to speak up and to be able to do so safely, that we needed to engage all of the University's partners and that, although progress had been made, there was a significant amount of further work to be done and that it needed to be done with a greater sense of urgency.