“Authentic Racial Equity goes beyond uncovering racism and correcting inequities – it focuses on a higher purpose – building a flourishing environment that works for everyone.”

Joretha Johnson, CEO/President
Advanced Transformational Technologies
2020
Introduction

NC State’s culture exists within the context of the United States’ social, political and cultural climate. Considering this context as well as our nation’s history of slow progress in addressing racism, understandable and genuine feelings of anger, distrust, uncertainty, fear and fatigue are to be expected when approaching the topic of igniting authentic racial equity. Acknowledging the challenges of the times and the complexity of the topic, the will and determination to move the university forward remains paramount and urgent. The Appreciative Inquiry-based Racial Equity Summit was designed to transition tension into enthusiasm for change, cynicism into hope, and inaction into sustained cooperative commitment and real progress.

This report summarizes how an Appreciative Inquiry approach was utilized in a Racial Equity Summit to bring a large (>70) number of NC State University students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni and community stakeholders together. The purpose of the virtual forum was to gather meaningful personal input from across the community about what racial equity might look like at NC State from a qualitative perspective. This work is being blended with other efforts to help chart the university’s way forward in its work toward racial equity.

The Appreciative Inquiry process begins by identifying an affirmative topic that describes what is desired and then finds ways to move towards that desired state, rather than focusing on what is not working or what is not wanted. The affirmative topic for this Summit focused on how NC State could work on Igniting Authentic Racial Equity. Provocative, aspirational statements about igniting authentic racial equity provided the basis for small group discussions among the participants of the Summit in order to better understand the attitudes, behaviors, customs, culture and policies that NC State could utilize to Ignite Authentic Racial Equity.

The Context for the Summit

NC State, like most institutions of higher education, has had numerous programs and initiatives over decades aimed at addressing racial equity. While progress has been made over time, there is still much work to be done, as feelings and experiences of bias, inequality and cultural barriers persist. Minoritized populations, such as people of color and women, are unevenly impacted by persistent inequities and an environment in which the status quo frequently perpetuates those inequities.

Several notable events during the spring and summer of 2020, including the murder of George Floyd and subsequent calls to action across the nation to address racial inequities, intensified the urgency to do even more to advance NC State’s efforts in this area. In July 2020, the Coalition of Black Student Organizations submitted a petition outlining specific actions desired for advancing Black student life at NC State. Chancellor Randy Woodson and other university leaders committed to implementing all of the items outlined in the student petition and named several additional university-level initiatives aimed at addressing racial inequality. These commitments were accompanied by a genuine acknowledgement that ongoing efforts to address systemic racism will require strong leadership, unending commitment, accountability, sustained effort and ongoing community engagement. Dr. Saundra Wall Williams, Chair of the Chancellor’s African American Community
Advisory Council and an NC State alumna, captured it well in a Summit planning meeting, saying that many people, especially people of color, are tired of “just talking, tired of fighting, tired of having conversations” and are more about “getting to action.”

Chancellor Woodson tasked Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity Sheri Schwab to convene a Racial Equity Summit in the fall of 2020. Chancellor Woodson’s vision for the Summit was to provide a platform to build a diverse, inclusive and equitable university convening that would form the basis for reframing and accelerating ongoing, community-driven efforts to improve the Black experience at NC State.

Given the imperative for improvement at all levels – structural, organizational, cultural and individual – it was necessary to go beyond traditional approaches to the issue. Conducting climate surveys, holding town halls and launching a new task force are methods that had all been used before, but the times call for new thinking and a different approach. In addition, there was a strong need to create a sense of community while using virtual technology with a wide array of participants. The Appreciative Inquiry format was chosen to conduct the Summit. Approaching the topic of racial equity through an affirmative versus deficit-based lens itself offered a different approach. As noted by Senior Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs Katharine Stewart during a planning meeting, NC State “need(s) to do more than say what NOT to do, but rather give people something new, different TO do (emphasis added).”

**Desired Outcomes of the Summit**

The goals of the Racial Equity Summit were to:

1. Increase self-awareness, mindfulness and support regarding authentic racial equity at NC State.
2. Bring about positive relationships through intentional community engagement.
3. Identify immediate, near-term changes as well as longer-term initiatives to incorporate into Strategic Plan Goals and Priorities.
4. Create and launch a Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Accountability structure for ongoing identification, assessment and resolution or progress toward relevant issues.
5. Repeat with future equity-related summits regularly to infuse continuous engagement, make space for addressing equity issues for all groups, track improvements and communicate progress.

**The Inquiry Design**

Joretha Johnson, CEO/President of Advanced Transformational Technologies and a member of the Chancellor’s African American Community Advisory Council, facilitated the development and implementation of the Appreciative Inquiry process for the Summit. As part of this process, Johnson, in collaboration with Vice Provost Schwab and a Guiding Coalition, identified and invited
Summit participants, developed four affirmative framing statements of the igniting authentic racial equity inquiry, and crafted the unconditional positive questions that align with each phase of the Appreciative Inquiry model.

Participants

The Summit process valued the building of relationships and the power and creativity that comes from hearing from multiple diverse experiences and perspectives. The Summit was designed to deliberately involve a wide range of internal perspectives – both as a way to build internal problem-solving capacity and as a way to capture the wisdom that exists within the NC State community. Individual students (graduate and undergraduate), staff members, faculty members, deans, executive officers, alumni and community members were invited to participate by Chancellor Woodson to ensure representation at all levels of the university. Participation was limited to invitees due to the discussion-based virtual format.

Fifteen NC State employees were trained as small group facilitators to conduct the inquiry, capture notes, and share conclusions during the community debriefs. In addition, a Guiding Coalition of leaders from various constituencies across campus and the community was used to help design the Summit and set the stage for ongoing engagements. A Steering Team of university executive leaders was assembled to take action based on the Summit outcomes. A list of the participants by group is provided in Appendix A.

Igniting Authentic Racial Equity: The Four Affirmative Framing Statements

In the Appreciative Inquiry process, the topic – in this case, Igniting Authentic Racial Equity – is centered by framing statements. The following were the framing statements for the Racial Equity Summit:

1. Racial equity authentically brings all individuals and/or groups into mutually respectful and beneficial processes, procedures, policies, systems, activities, decision-making and leadership in a way that shares and fairly disperses power.

2. Authentic racial equity goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not purely the absence of discrimination and inequities, but rather the presence of purposeful systems, programs and culture that are designed to achieve and sustain racial equity through deliberative, proactive, preventative and sustainable measures.

3. Authentic racial equity is defined as the preemptive reinforcement of principles, policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

4. Authentic racial equity generates an unconditional sense of belonging – no matter the circumstances.

Appreciative Inquiry Phases and the Phase-Based Questions

Once a topic is defined and framed, the Appreciative Inquiry process relies on four phases: Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny. Each phase centers around discussion of a specific unconditional
positive question. The unconditional positive questions intentionally elicit personal narratives from participants, as opposed to generating specific solutions, ideals or theories. Discussion of the phase-based question prepares participants and creates space for the subsequent phase.

For the Racial Equity Summit, small groups of diverse participants (e.g., mixed groups of students, staff, faculty, administrators, alumni and community members) convened during each phase for facilitated discussion of the specific unconditional positive questions (see below). Each small group was led by a team of 2 or 3 facilitators who helped guide the conversation and capture the narratives shared in each group. At the conclusion of each small group discussion, all Summit participants met together and listened to reported highlights from each group’s conversation. During the fourth and final phase of the Summit, the small groups were reconfigured so that participants could meet within constituent groups (e.g., students with students, faculty with faculty, etc.).

*The Discover Phase*

The purpose of the Discover Phase is to identify factors and forces that make moments of excellence possible for each participant, to capture the lingering effects of that experience and to understand the value of being able to intentionally generate an unconditional sense of belonging.

The unconditional positive question: Tell me about a time when you experienced an unconditional sense of belonging?

*The Dream Phase*

The Dream Phase elicits peak experiences or moments of excellence that generate positive insights or experiences regarding authentic racial equity and builds on the sense of hope created when participants reflected on what they hoped the Summit would accomplish.

The unconditional positive question: Authentic racial equity means that the distribution of resources and opportunities is neither determined by or predicted by race, racial bias or racial ideology. As you reflect on this, recall a time when you were able to flourish and thrive in all aspects of your identity.

*The Design Phase*

The Design Phase offers participants an opportunity to share specific actions to ignite authentic racial equity at NC State.

The unconditional positive question: If you could have any three wishes that would allow all people, cultures and identities at NC State to experience authentic racial equity, what would they be and why?
**The Destiny Phase**

The Destiny Phase supports the transformation of broad ideas and insights into specific commitments or requests for support, resources or engagement from others in order to implement the desired changes.

The unconditional positive question: What have you learned and how should we apply it? What else would we like to learn? What are the indicated actions for your group?

**Participant Experiences and Themes**

As mentioned, the Appreciative Inquiry process’s phase-based questions were designed to intentionally elicit narratives from the lived experiences of Summit participants. Rather than identifying specific solutions – a task not feasible in this short virtual format – the Summit generated an authentic conversation about elements that are foundational to Igniting Authentic Racial Equity.

There were several themes that persisted throughout the Summit. Participants expressed an appreciation for bringing together leaders from across various constituencies to talk, listen and learn from each other. Participants repeatedly expressed an ongoing desire to develop deeper connections and to support one another (i.e., cultivate a sense of family). In addition, there was a clear theme of hope that the Summit would be the onset of positive change, while at the same time a thread of doubt that things really would change.

Themes identified within each Appreciative Inquiry phase are noted in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes by Phase-Based Question</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discover</strong>: Tell me about a time when you experienced an unconditional sense of belonging.</td>
<td>Participants named positive feelings and emotions, identified affirming outcomes and results and shared factors that supported success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dream</strong>: Authentic racial equity means that the distribution of resources and opportunities is neither determined by or predicted by race, racial bias or racial ideology. Recall a time when you were able to flourish and thrive in all aspects of your identity.</td>
<td>Participants offered aspects of supportive infrastructure, described positive emotional attractors and shared successful results. Participants also identified significant barriers to one’s ability to thrive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design</strong>: If you could have any three wishes that would allow all people, cultures and identities at NC State to experience authentic racial equity, what would they be and why?</td>
<td>Participants shared insights in the areas of: Enhancements to university culture, specific strategies to enhance equity, structural changes to the institution and revising current and implementing new systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Destiny</strong>: What have you learned and how should we apply it? What else would we like to learn? What are the indicated actions for your group?</td>
<td>Participants committed to action in the following areas: Creating opportunities to make personal connections, involving leadership and engaging in risk-taking, intentional recruitment of Black employees and students, expanding mentorship programs, requiring diversity training for employees and students and providing more clarity, cohesiveness and transparency around tangible action items.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For a majority of participants, the Appreciative Inquiry approach was a positive experience. According to post-Summit evaluation data, 75% of participants felt that the Summit “was a useful step toward achieving racial equity at NC State.” See Appendix B for a summary of post-Summit evaluation data.

At the same time, some participants expressed frustration with the Appreciative Inquiry format, noting the belief that some identities are (or have been) marginalized and that some people are privileged, makes it hard to define (or imagine) authentic racial equity. Some participants reported feelings of fear that nothing would change following the Summit, while others expressed hope that the Summit would be the beginning of positive change.

**Key Take-Aways: Recognizing Authentic Racial Equity**

The Racial Equity Summit confirmed that an authentic sense of racial equity is realized at a very personal level. The narratives and lived-experiences shared by participants support our ability to know what authentic racial equity looks and feels like, versus a theoretical definition. Within this individual experience of what authentic racial equity would entail, several common themes arose that are beneficial to creating a shared meaning of this important foundational concept and will be critical components of turning ideas into action moving forward.

**Sense of Belonging**

Participants identified authentic racial equity as a deep sense of belonging, mutual ownership and support for the success of the person and the institution, and a sense that one is welcomed to be a part of and included in something that is bigger than oneself – an ability to rise above or go beyond individual emotions or concerns.

Participants shared their experiences of the sense of racial equity through stories of supportive, family-like environments and recalled feeling unconditional acceptance – there was not a need to justify one’s presence or value.

**Resilience and Empowerment**

Participants shared examples of experiencing authentic racial equity through stories of resilience or perseverance; of when they were able to successfully overcome obstacles or barriers that had been either socially or psychologically constructed.

Many participants connected authentic racial equity to the sense of being unstoppable and of being able to achieve a personal sense of empowerment, achievement or self-actualization despite the attitudes, behaviors or policies of others, i.e., “I know that racial equity exists because of who I am and where I am personally situated.” Participants described experiencing authentic racial equity as when they felt empowerment to make a difference.

One person described the experience of authentic racial equity as having the “superpower” of knowing that they “could accomplish anything!”
Expressing One’s True Self

Through their stories, participants described authentic racial equity as a sense of realizing that people could be their true selves and still feel valued and accepted by others. In experiencing authentic racial equity, there was ultimately a sense of freedom and space to “be (and to be known as) who I was really meant to be.”

Desire to Influence Positive Change

As a result of the Summit, many participants shared an expanded desire and ability to influence positive change. They became hopeful as they listened to diverse stories and experiences from trusted friends and colleagues or from people representing other constituencies within the institution. Participants’ sense of hope was lifted as what they understood to be true about igniting racial equity was challenged through a positive and provocative method.

Existence of Negative Emotional Attractors

The questions triggered strong negative emotional responses as well. Negative emotional attractors are the values, beliefs or attitudes preventing (or blocking) people from personally experiencing or igniting authentic racial equity. In some cases, participants were confronted by an existing wall of despair and engaged in conversations that reinforced distrust and fears that nothing would change.

When a sense of equity did not exist or was not generated within the activities of the Summit, it was difficult for participants to believe that an unconditional sense of belonging, or a broad-based, sustained ability to personally thrive and flourish, is possible. Consequently, it was challenging to maintain a positive inquiry for some discussion groups in those portions of the Summit, which further demonstrates and confirms that there are genuine and real obstacles to overcome. It can be very difficult to move beyond negative emotions regarding racial inequity or to create a desire to build ongoing, trusting, respectful relationships in an environment that does not genuinely value or elicit authentic racial equity. Persistence of negative emotional attractors was identified as a limitation of the Summit or a circumstance where the goals were not fully achieved.

The valuable insights gained from participant narratives describe and inform the foundation upon which to build a culture and an environment supporting authentic racial equity. Progress will take sustained commitment, dedicated resources and thoughtful, continuous and collaborative action across all segments of NC State.

Key Take-Aways: Progress toward Stated Goals of the Summit

The progress made toward Summit goals is outlined below. Although the Summit itself was not designed to yield an extensive set of detailed, aligned specific actions and plans, the identification of themes supporting authentic racial equity provides a valuable lens through which to initiate next steps. Additionally, the work of the small groups brought forth several areas for improvement, including several specific actions for additional development, as well as changes in participants’ mental frameworks, attitudes and behaviors. These ideas and suggestions are being developed further by the Steering Team, in collaboration with the Guiding Coalition and broader community, and incorporated into other university initiatives, priorities and strategies (see “Beyond the Summit”).
Additional analysis of the use of the Appreciative Inquiry process in the context of racial equity may be found in Appendix D.

**Goal 1:** Increase self awareness, mindfulness and support regarding authentic racial equity at NC State.

**Outcome:** Participant feedback (evaluation data and anecdotal comments) demonstrates success with this outcome for Summit participants. In evaluation data, 64.3% of participants said they gained knowledge about racial equity, and 78.6% said they were committed to putting what they learned into action.

**Goal 2:** Bring about positive relationships through intentional community engagement.

**Outcome:** Participant feedback (evaluation data and anecdotal comments) demonstrates success with this outcome for Summit participants. Evaluation data offers that 71.4% of participants said they planned to initiate similar conversations with others.

**Goal 3:** Identify immediate/near-term changes as well as longer-term initiatives to incorporate into Strategic Plan goals and priorities.

**Outcome:** Participants generated and shared a wealth of ideas, and those ideas were recorded and analyzed and grouped by themes. The need for a concrete action plan and for leaders to communicate the action items were prominent themes in open-ended participant feedback. For example, one participant noted, “I wish we could get to some more specific goal setting for NC State.”

The following ideas present high-potential areas for improvement and focus, and arose repeatedly during the Summit across multiple groups:

1. Igniting authentic racial equity is going to take leadership and risk-taking – it requires a deep individual and organizational commitment to prioritize the resources needed to provide high impact practices for everyone.

2. Create opportunities to make personal connections to support a welcoming and inclusive environment. Suggestions include: Dialogue events, mentoring and networking events, opportunities to have space for thoughtful conversation about climate and culture.

3. Intentional recruitment and retention of Black employees and students.

4. Mentorship is an important factor; there is common wisdom and a consistent desire for further work and investment in this area (e.g., having someone to help guide or navigate the system, create opportunities and open doors).

5. Required DEI coursework for students and training for employees.
6. More clarity, cohesiveness, regularity and transparency of developing and reviewing progress towards tangible action items.

7. Authentic communication by leaders.

**Goal 4:** Create and launch a Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion accountability structure.

**Outcome:** The need for accountability was a prominent theme in open-ended participant feedback. Accountability was built into the Summit design: The Guiding Coalition was instrumental in focusing the topics to explore during the event and has committed to continuing to identify issues related to Igniting Authentic Racial Equity for NC State. In addition, the Steering Team was assembled and consists of university leaders who serve as administrative liaisons to the Guiding Coalition, and this Team is responsible for elevating and implementing action items.

External to the Summit, university leaders, including the Steering Team, will be held accountable to implementing Summit initiatives by cross-referenced items in the university’s upcoming Strategic Plan, as well as regular communication on the topic to the university community and updates on NC State’s diversity web page.

**Goal 5:** Repeat with future equity-related summits regularly to infuse continuous engagement, make space for addressing equity issues for all groups and track improvements and communicate progress.

**Outcome:** NC State has engaged in and continues to engage ongoing efforts throughout the university community related to racial equity. Although not within the Summit itself, but as part of the process, the Steering Team and Guiding Coalition have met, and will continue to meet, to identify and implement effective action steps, including equity-related events and programs.

The Summit conversations identified several possible topics for continued engagement (see “Key Take-Aways: Future Dialogues about Progressing towards Improving Racial Equity” below).

**Key Take-Aways: Future Dialogues about Progressing towards Improving Racial Equity**

In order to sustain the sense of hope that was generated during the Summit, it is important to tap into the desire that was expressed for deeper, ongoing connections by continuing the small group conversations and holding mini-summits. It is especially important to follow up with the students, staff and faculty that did not see or experience immediate action or changes during or as a result of the Summit.

Consistent with feedback from Summit participants, Joretha Johnson, lead facilitator, recommended that the university hold more frequent conversations with colleagues, students and community members relevant to racial equity. These conversations can help build relationships, generate hope and lead to personal epiphanies, and it is these epiphanies that will generate strong positive emotional attractors and experiences that can help overcome negative emotions.
Following are ideas for future conversation topics as suggested by Ms. Johnson:

- How can we create and sustain a sense of safety and belonging for Black students, faculty and staff?
- How can we encourage intersectional networks, increase mutual respect and generate higher quality connections across racial boundaries (including student, staff, faculty and community members)?
- How can we promote racial healing and become a more consistently unbiased, equitable institution?
- How can we better attract, include and promote Black faculty, staff, and students?
- How can we improve the transparency and accountability of our systems, programs and culture to more purposefully achieve and sustain authentic racial equity?

**Racial Equity: Next Steps for Change**

The insights gained from the Summit on how to ignite authentic racial equity – for example, fostering a sense of belonging and empowering positive change – may seem obvious but are both necessary and challenging to implement and manage on a large scale. During the Summit, the Appreciative Inquiry process briefly generated a sense of excitement and possibility, a sense of hope, that supports facilitating the organizational change necessary to ignite and sustain authentic racial equity.

Following the Summit, participant feedback was collected and analyzed, and facilitators, the Guiding Coalition and the Steering Team members met to debrief the experience. This Summit Report was prepared to: 1) document and communicate the Summit experience, 2) present data and information, and 3) capture and document key learnings and recommendations.

The Summit was structured in such a way that organizational leaders may pick up where the event left off in developing near- and long-term action steps, incorporating an accountability structure, and ultimately creating space for continuous engagement, improvements and communicating accomplishments. Plans are in place for the Steering Team to identify tangible action items with support of the Guiding Coalition and campus stakeholders. In addition, university leaders will infuse lessons learned from the Summit into new and ongoing commitments related to racial equity.

**Connecting and Aligning with Other Racial Equity Efforts**

The Racial Equity Summit originated as one opportunity to process and work toward renewed calls to address racial inequities, but it is not the only effort underway. Several complementary initiatives are in progress at the university level and at the UNC System level, underscoring persistent themes, and will augment the work and findings of the Summit. In addition, university leaders will enhance existing and new commitments related to racial equity by infusing lessons learned from the Summit.

It is notable that ideas for high-potential areas of improvement generated during the Summit aligned with several of the UNC Systems Office Racial Equity Task Force recommendations. That system-
wide effort was conducted at the same time as NC State’s Summit and included surveys and town hall meetings with students, faculty and staff across all institutions about achieving racial equity, culminating in a set of recommendations to the UNC Board of Governors (presented January 20, 2021). In this way, NC State’s work was complemented by those efforts without duplicating them.

**UNC System Racial Equity Task Force Recommendations**

During Fall 2020, the same time frame as the Summit, the UNC System engaged a Racial Equity Task Force (RETF) to gather and analyze data from constituent institutions through widespread efforts involving surveys and town halls. The RETF report provides robust information and several salient recommendations for action. Of the six Goals and 28 action items proposed, not all will be relevant for NC State, but many of the themes and recommendations align with Summit goals and outcomes. NC State already has several of the recommendations in place, such as DEI education (#4), DEI staffing (#1) and many of the items listed under Campus policing (#6).

The six RETF recommendations are summarized as follows:

1. **Diversity and Equity Staffing to Support Inclusion and Belonging**
   The System Office should establish an executive position that reports directly to the president to implement the recommendations of the UNC System Racial Equity Task Force and oversee future equity and inclusion initiatives. All faculty, staff and students should have access to a diversity, equity and inclusion representative and a safe space to talk confidentially about inequities.

2. **Representation and Retention at All Levels of the University**
   Examine and improve recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention policies and practices to build a racially diverse and equitable university of students, faculty, staff and top leadership.

3. **Data and Accountability**
   Establish reporting requirements, accountability mechanisms and processes that support a sustainable procedure for collecting race and equity data and the implementation of strategies that will help build support of a more equitable UNC System.

4. **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Education**
   Establish comprehensive programming for all students, faculty and staff of the UNC System and provide mandatory training for those individuals charged with ensuring compliance with diversity and inclusion standards, including institutional leadership, department chairs, division leaders and others who serve in a supervisory role.

5. **Programs and Activities in Support of Racial Equity and Inclusion**
   Develop and support programs that improve equitable outcomes.

6. **Campus Policing**
   Build upon and make consistent across institutions training, procedures and data collection practices that effectively support and promote racial equity in campus policing. Strengthen partnerships with other campus departments to facilitate alternative and/or shared responses to certain crises.
NC State’s Current and Ongoing Commitments

As noted in the introduction, Chancellor Woodson and the university leadership committed to several immediate actions in June 2020 aimed at addressing racial equity. Initiatives underway include:

- Join AAAS’s SEA Change: NC State joined this national higher education effort, spearheaded by the prestigious American Academy for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS), as a charter member to review our policies and practices for faculty at a STEM university through an equity lens. This multi-year project is currently underway.

- Implement required DEI Training for all students, staff and faculty: The faculty module launched in August 2020; the staff and student modules will launch February 1, 2021.

- Name Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as a university Strategic Plan Goal, and include DEI into division and college-level plans: DEI has been developed as one of seven university goals. These goals are being vetted by the university community and will be considered for adoption by NC State’s Board of Trustees in April 2021.

- Incorporate DEI into staff work plans: This item was put into place for the 2020-21 appraisal year, as part of the action plan from the Employee Engagement Survey.

- Data collection and analysis for action: Institutional Strategy and Analysis and the Office for Institutional Equity and Diversity are collaboratively assessing data from the (Student) Campus Climate Survey and the (Employee) Engagement Survey and inviting the university community into discussions on insights and trends.

The structure put in place by the Racial Equity Summit – involvement of a Steering Team and a Guiding Coalition – will foster alignment between ongoing commitments, system-level recommendations and Summit-specific next steps.

Closing: An Authentic Way Forward

Change is challenging and requires sustained effort in a complex and evolving environment. Pain, distrust, fear and anger are elements that must be intentionally acknowledged and healed. The path toward healing involves trust-building through responsiveness, transparency, sincerity, consistency and action. To ignite authentic racial equity, NC State must engage in continuous improvement and frequent navigational checks to ensure the university is making progress and appropriately adjusting its course over time. There is much work to be done, and the Racial Equity Summit offered insight into a positive vision by which the university and its constituents may align. With challenge comes opportunities for innovation – a space where NC State excels. To that end, NC State is committed to igniting and sustaining a culture and environment of authentic racial equity.

Organizations change fastest and best when people have a clear plan and direction to move forward, have hope about where they are going, and feel confident about their abilities to reach their destination. Consistent action toward igniting authentic racial equity, along with combating the inevitable setbacks and overcoming resistance to change, must be experienced before enduring hope and trust can be expected. Igniting authentic racial equity goes beyond platitudes, or even good intentions, to create truly legitimate, equitable policies and practices that are executed in good faith and feel genuine and trusted by all parties.
Appendix A

Racial Equity Summit Involvement

Planning and executing the Racial Equity Summit involved participation at all levels and from many different groups, including:

**Steering Team**

Sheri Schwab, Vice Provost, Institutional Equity and Diversity
Brad Bohlander, Associate Vice Chancellor, University Communications
Paula Gentius, Chief of Staff, Chancellor’s Office
Peter Harries, Dean, Graduate School
Kevin Howell, Vice Chancellor, External Affairs
Katharine Stewart, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
Benny Suggs, Associate Vice Chancellor, Alumni Affairs
Marie Williams, Associate Vice Chancellor, Human Resources
Lisa Zapata, Interim Vice Chancellor, Division of Academic and Student Affairs

**Guiding Coalition**

RaJade Berry-James, Chair-Elect of the Faculty Senate
Tiffany Dangleben, President, Black Graduate Student Association
Helen DiPietro, Chair-Elect, Staff Senate
Darien Dixon, Vice President, Black Graduate Student Association
Melanie Flowers, Student Body President
Pat Gaddy, Chair, Staff Senate
Hans Kellner, Chair of the Faculty Senate
Lexie Malico, President of the Graduate Student Association
Samantha Warren, President, Black Alumni Society; Chancellor’s African American Community Advisory Council
Saundra Wall Williams, Chair, Chancellor’s African American Community Advisory Council
Kayla Wilmot, Undergraduate Student
Appendix A

Racial Equity Summit Involvement (continued)

Summit Facilitators

Lead Facilitator: Joretha Johnson, CEO/President, Advanced Transformational Technologies, Chancellor’s African American Community Advisory Council Member
Cintia Aguilar, Director of Latinx Programs and Juntos, CALS/Extension
Monica Banks, Assistant to the Vice Provost, Office of Faculty Affairs, NCBI and IDI Facilitator
Christy Byrd, Assistant Professor (Intercultural Dialogue, OIED Faculty Fellow), College of Education
Adrienne Davis, OIED, Director of Bias Impact/Community Care Response
Stephanie Davis, Learning & Development Manager and IDI Facilitator, NC State Human Resources
Kristen Feierabend, Urban Community Development Area Agent, Cooperative Extension
Marian Fragola, Director, Program Planning and Outreach, NC State Libraries
Stephanie Helms-Pickett, OIED, Associate Vice Provost, IESP
Melvin “Jai” Jackson, Director of Graduate Recruitment, Mentoring and Success, College of Education
Susan Jakes, Associate State Program Leader for Community & Rural Development, CALS/Extension
Paula McAvoy, Assistant Professor, College of Education
Jonathan McCorey, OIED, Director, GLBT Center
Nikki Price, Assistant Dean for Culture, Talent and Human Resources and IDI Facilitator, College of Sciences
Kittrane Sanders, Community and Rural Development Agent, Cooperative Extension
Rebecca Zuvich, Assistant Dean for Personnel and Talent, CALS

Participants

Deans (11)
Faculty Members (7)
Alumni/Community Members (12)
Chancellor’s Cabinet Members (13)
Staff Members (13)
Students – Graduate and Undergraduate (16)

NC State extends gratitude to all those listed above, with additional thanks to Danielle Carr, Amy Circosta, Marnie Cohen, Elizabeth Snively, and University Communications, whose assistance and dedication made this event possible.
Appendix B

Post Racial Equity Summit Evaluation Data Summary

Of the 72 Racial Equity Summit participants, 28 (39%) provided feedback through an online evaluation form. The data indicated:

- 75% felt that the Summit was a useful step toward achieving racial equity at NC State
- 68% of participants agreed that Appreciative Inquiry was a productive method for navigating racial equity
- 93% felt that they had opportunities to share their perspectives
- 79% were committed to take what they learned and put it into action
- 89% would be willing to attend future equity-related Summits or events at NC State
- 71% planned to use the same questions to initiate similar conversations
- 64% felt they gained knowledge about racial equity from the Summit
- 82% felt the actions discussed were achievable with commitment and continued actions

In addition, the following themes arose in the open-ended feedback:

What is one thing that pleased or surprised you during the Summit?
- Leadership presence
- Openness of the discussion
- Diverse representation of participants (race and NC State affiliation)

What is one thing you wished had been covered in the Summit that wasn’t?
- Concrete action items and goal setting
- More time to share stories and dig deeper into issues
- Having difficult conversations centering racial inequality

What is one thing you will share with your co-workers or friends about this experience?
- Positivity throughout the event
- That the Summit is a starting point upon which to build

Describe what actions you are going to take based on your participation in the Summit.
- Commitment to continuing the conversation about racial equity
- Listening
- Seeking out engagement and learning opportunities around racial equity

What actions by NC State will make you feel the university is building off lessons learned in the Summit?
- Accountability
- Identifying specific ideas for next steps

What communication do you expect from NC State related to outcomes of the Summit?
- Share action items the University is undertaking
- Share a summary of the Summit publicly
Appendix C

Participant Experience by AI Phase

Question 1:
When have you experienced an unconditional sense of belonging?

- This question helps us discover the potential value of Igniting Authentic Racial Equity for this community.
- It identifies positive emotional attractors that describe our motivations for achieving Authentic Racial Equity.
- Improving the institution’s capacity to collectively Ignite Authentic Racial Equity can represent a competitive advantage.

Facilitator’s insights:

Common themes:
- Togetherness
- There’s equality within the group: feeling of being part of something bigger than yourself
- Feeling of empowerment when you’re with others who support you
- Respect
- Trust
- The person or group “has your back”
- Unconditional acceptance

- Confidence/comfort to be myself
- Acceptance is a given--you don’t have to justify yourself
- Feeling of relief: it’s tough to feel a sense of unconditional belonging, but those moments that you do, there’s a sense of relief to be yourself without having to conform to all the boxes people try to put you in
- It’s ok to have conflict/disagreement, will still be accepted
- Unconditional belonging hasn’t been experienced by everyone

Question 2:
When were you able to flourish & thrive in all aspects of your identity?

This question ultimately helps us understand the conditions that Ignite Authentic Racial Equity for this community.

These factors point towards infrastructures and cultural elements (positive and negative) that either ignite or inhibit the ability to Ignite Authentic Racial Equity.
Question 3: What would allow all people, cultures & identities to experience authentic racial equity?

- This question builds on insights from the previous conversations and identifies specific actions for igniting Authentic Racial Equity.
- The responses can be summarized into four areas

STRATEGIES

Finding ways to understand what it means to bring life to a different voice is critical to understanding what it feels like to have experiences and ideas that are not as familiar. This phase involved reflecting on the experiences of others who have worked to create a space for change and heal the pain of their own identity. The goal is to create a habit of speaking in multiple voices and perspectives.

STRATEGICALLY

Agreement around social acceptability of funding should reflect cultural (vs. diversity fund)
- More reason for faculty and staff to support with more similar background
- Deliberate policy to expand and opportunity
- Formulate plans to have real conversations, with or without a resolution
- Require diversity training for students and employees with possible implications
- Establish and maintain staff or lines between social identities that are connected to or are supported by the department.
- Ensure that the conversations can become part of the campus culture.
- “We have to do this”
- Although a collective agreement, engage all members, which is what is needed to fully support the broader community.

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Question 4: What have you learned and how should we apply it?

This question is designed to help us discover what are the hopes, dreams, epiphanies, observations, or insights that need to be carried forth in order to Ignite Authentic Racial Equity for this community.

It identifies commitments (promises for action) and requests for support, resources, or engagement from others in implementing the desired changes.

There is a science amongst what you know, but how does one transport that to implementing change? How might we move things from a fairly localized environment to something more? Learning about the actions to be taken.

At the Dean’s level, we can impact hiring. We can move the ball much farther than we think we can.

We think about belonging and community to create a diverse community where everyone may succeed.

Better support students to be able to thrive.

Thought more about how faculty, staff and students and this idea of not being able to be one’s authentic self. How might we create environments that enable all populations to be themselves and not have to swim against the tide/folw.
Appendix D

The AI Process in the Context of Racial Equity at NC State

This was NC State’s first experience using the Appreciative Inquiry process at an institutional scale to address racial equity. Participant feedback was assessed relative to the productivity of this model as well as elements to replicate, restructure, continue or discontinue as a model for fostering advancement of more racially equitable culture at NC State.

Throughout the process, participants expressed appreciation for three overarching themes: 1) leadership presence and active participation, 2) openness of discussion among participants and 3) diverse representation of participants. Unmet expectations of participants coalesced around lack of 1) concrete action items and goal setting, 2) sufficient time to share stories and dig deeper into issues and 3) having difficult conversations centering racial inequality.

Within the Appreciative Inquiry model, in order to envision authentic racial equity -- a critical element of this appreciative inquiry process -- participants must temporarily set aside very real barriers created by systems of oppression. This novel process (at least to racial equity conversations at NC State) presented opportunities to envision “what could be,” but was not without its challenges. Participant expectations were difficult to establish, even with directed pre-work about the appreciative inquiry process. Consequently, some participants came to the Summit ready to voice inequities and were disappointed or frustrated, and perhaps found it disingenuous, that such an opportunity was not part of the experience.

Some participants found the lack of acknowledgement of systemic oppression within the Summit event itself to be dismissive of lived experience and ultimately prohibitive of engaging in the appreciative process. Prior to engaging in future appreciative inquiries on this topic, it will be critical to evaluate how to acknowledge hurtful experiences with racism and oppression without allowing the existence of negativity to inhibit the Appreciative Inquiry process. In addition, during the Summit, it became clear that breakout room facilitators had not been adequately equipped with the facilitation skills to redirect small group conversation to align with the Appreciative Inquiry model or that the structure did not allow for an outlet for participants who desired to engage the topic from that lens.

From a logistics perspective, the breakout groups offered opportunities to form new relationships and hold thoughtful conversations, which were highlights for many participants. Of note, rapport was disrupted for some participants when the small groups were reformulated from cross-sectional groups to affinity-based groups for the final breakout conversation.

In addition, the Summit began to touch on the desired outcomes but was not long enough to thoroughly explore the question of how to ignite authentic racial equity and create a tangible plan of action steps. That said, overall, the Summit provided NC State with a solution-focused model to continue to employ, an opportunity to engage in rich dialogue that was also practice for future exercises, and identification of key themes for follow up.