

UW-Eau Claire: To host 'Tunnel of Awareness' event April 13

Posted on Wednesday, Apr 6, 2022

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The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire will host an interactive event for students that takes a deep dive into implicit bias and the ways it can impact life for students on campus.

Expanding on the learning opportunities highlighted recently through the Smithsonian Institute's "The Bias Inside Us" exhibit at Pablo Center at the Confluence, UW-Eau Claire's division of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Student Affairs will present the "Tunnel of Awareness" from 5-8 p.m. Wednesday, April 13, in the Dakota Ballroom of Davies Center.

Joshua Gonzalez, a graduate assistant for UW-Eau Claire's Center for EDI Training, Development and Education, has been a lead organizer of the first-time event. He explains how resurrecting a similar past campus event, the "Tunnel of Oppression," provided a unique EDI education and training opportunity.

Gonzalez says that where the goal of the previous event was to educate students about oppression and examples like micro-aggressions, this new event will examine specific thought patterns contributing to those negative behaviors.

"Our participating groups will each be taking on one of the 'isms' seen in the important Smithsonian exhibit, and they will develop even more specific ways for our students to examine those biases at play right here, in real-life and theoretical examples," Gonzalez says.

"Through the interactive process and the guided follow-up discussions, our main goals are to educate and offer resources and support to students, faculty and staff most directly affected by all these types of bias."

What to expect

Gonzalez describes a setup similar to the self-guided walk through the Pablo-hosted event last month, one in which all attendees progress through a series of stations/exhibits curated by various campus offices and student groups. The event is self-paced, but attendees should expect to spend 60-90 minutes to complete all the stations.

The campus groups curating a section of the event and the topics each will be addressing are:

- Equitable Residential Experiences (ERE) will present about racism, citing some specific experiences from the campus and Eau Claire community.
- Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (GSRC) will be depicting examples of homophobia and transphobia.
- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) will present about ableism and the many ways the world is not equitable or equally accessible to people with disabilities.
- Equity in Student Matters (ESM) will share information about their different student commissions in the hallway near the reflection/discussion spaces.
- Members of the Honors Colloquium in Documentary Theater will present some of their projects that touch on topics surrounding bias.
- Peer Diversity Educators (PDE) will offer a space that educates about classism.
- Inter-Tribal Student Council (ITSC) will curate a space, with the exact topic of bias against Indigenous people yet to be determined.
- Campus a capella group Fifth Harmony will perform outside of the Dakota Ballroom, offering background music as students reflect on the content.

“It’s exciting to be able to build on the expertise offered in the Smithsonian exhibit by walking our students through the tangible aspects of their own lives where the outcomes of implicit bias play out, along with tangible ways we can all change our own bias-influenced behaviors,” Gonzalez says.

Sara Nagel is one of the peer diversity educators helping to create a section of the event. The senior psychology major also completed the EDI certificate offered through UW-Eau Claire’s Center for EDI Training, Development and Education. All students who attend the “Tunnel of Awareness” are eligible to register the experience as a Tier 2 EDI credit toward that same certificate.

Nagel is pleased to be part of offering yet another immersive learning experience to guide Blugolds along the path of cultural competence, a cornerstone of the UW-Eau Claire educational mission.

“Students will be asked to think critically throughout the entire event and make connections to things they may have seen, heard or experienced in their lives in relation to internal bias,” Nagel says.

“We will all examine our personal behaviors, how it is we move through this world, and how our personal and institutional interactions with others can be affected by implicit bias.”

[Follow this link to register for EDI credit at the “Tunnel of Awareness.”](#)