

Addendum

Policy Committee Meeting

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VLS Students Draft Anti-Racism Policy

Document Aims To Be Model For Schools, Businesses, Organizations

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VLS students Arielle King and Jameson C. Davis have crafted an anti-racism policy that they hope will be implemented in businesses and organizations across Vermont. (Provided)

Two Vermont Law School (VLS) students, Arielle King and Jameson C. Davis are working to carefully and permanently codify the principles of anti-racism in the White River Valley and beyond.

Working together as Schweitzer Fellows for the Vermont and New Hampshire region, Davis and King have drafted a versatile anti-racism policy that, they hope, may be adapted and implemented in schools, businesses, and organizations.

The policy centers on an approach designed to express “the explicit and unabashed denial and rejection of racist ideologies and understandings of the world,” King said.

The policy (and corresponding procedures), King said, “is really just a way to be rid of any type of racism, whether it be explicit or implicit within a setting.”

Explaining that a codified anti-racism policy represents a clear communication of what is considered acceptable behavior, King and Davis said their policy is intended to promote critical thinking on the multi-faceted—or intersectional— aspects of racism in organizational settings.

The policy they've created looks to provide a document that addresses and prevents actions, decisions, and outcomes that result from or perpetuate racism, White supremacy, and White superiority values and thoughts, Davis said.

The policy came about as Davis and King, each of whom are juris doctor candidates at VLS, researched and compiled “a whole bunch” of policies and practices they saw as the most practical for implementing at an organizational level.

Davis added that the two put particular effort into studying policies that “are being used to have a cultural shift.”

“During development, we really wanted to create a document that could be interchangeable and easily duplicated. We didn't create a document that was solely for schools, solely for corporations, solely for organizations.

“We wanted one that could be intertwined with all three but could be adjusted in certain areas to emphasize specific areas that schools might need that corporations don't, or vice versa,” he added.

In Hartford, King and Davis have already received preliminary approval from the school board for an anti-racism policy statement to be posted in all district buildings and be disseminated to all students, staff, faculty, and visitors.

“Anyone that enters that space will be aware that racism is not accepted or welcome in that space,” explained King.

Also included in the policy adopted by the Hartford School Board were provisions to “oppose teachings that perpetuate White supremacy and/or superiority,” as well as cultural awareness trainings for teachers and staff, and accountability measures to be implemented through restorative justice and mediation.

Notably, the policy deliberately stops short of listing specific forms of racism.

“Instead of trying to name every single [form of racism],” he explained, “we tried to create a policy to let individuals know that now is the time to look at the broader impacts of what racism means instead of just thinking of it in a way that's one-dimensional.”

In Hartford, the school board responded favorably and paved the way for a final vote on the policy later this month.

“We’ve been fortunate enough to present this policy to a large group of people so far,” said King, noting that Hartford School Board Chair and Vermont House Rep. Kevin Christie had also invited them to present the policy before the House Social Equity Caucus.

“So, we’re looking forward to partnering with other schools, organizations, and entities in the future.”

“We would love to see this become a statewide policy that would be implemented over all the school districts,” added Davis. “We hope that New Hampshire sees and they catch on. We hope that Maine sees that and Maine catches on.”

In providing policy services, King noted that some proceeds from the pair’s compensation are being donated to several other organizations— such as Color of Change and the African-American Board Leadership Institute—in a nod to their continuing efforts to broadly promote anti-racism work beyond the Green Mountain State’s borders.

“The policy should be looked at as a catalyst for cultural shift,” said Davis. “It’s not the last step, it’s the first step. It’s not the only step, it’s the first step.”