



Symposium on Educational Excellence 2024

Marunggay activity: gathering student input to advance the School of Public Health's antiracism initiative

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Keywords

Antiracism; Qualitative data; Public Health; Curriculum; Data Collection

Abstract




In 2020, the School of Public Health declared its commitment to becoming an antiracist institution. Student feedback is necessary for holding the institution accountable for its commitment to advancing antiracism; however, low response rates to traditional surveys have led us to explore innovative ways to collect student input. This activity aims to identify student interests, goals and needs to further the SPH's commitment to becoming an antiracist institution.

To address the low response rates, an activity was devised to encourage students to share their insight on improving antiracism initiatives in the school and empowering them in their journeys. As a Black and Filipina woman from Kalihi, my approach to designing the activity incorporated my Hiligaynon culture and the Bisaya, Ilokano, and Kapampangan cultures that influenced my upbringing. From a cultural context, Marunggay (also known as Balunggay, Malunggay, Kalamunggay, Moringa, or Drumstick tree) is a plant that provides sustenance and healing across various cultures within the Filipino diaspora. The bunga (seed pod) represents the learning that has been foundational to a person's journey in antiracism. The marunngay (leaf/tree) represents a person's strengths as a result of their lived and professional experiences. Lastly, the katuray (flower) represents areas for growth, learning, and the support needed to thrive in their efforts.

Data was collected from students (new and returning undergraduate/graduate) who attended the Fall Welcome in September 2023. Everyone was asked to answer the following questions:

1. What is important for your journey in antiracism? What has been a foundation for you and your journey?
2. What are your strengths? The things you bring to the table or have experience with?
3. What areas of social justice would you like to see yourself get more involved in? How do you envision getting involved in these efforts?

MARUNGAY ACTIVITY FOR REFLECTION

SEED POD ("BUNGA")	LEAF ("MARUNGAY")	FLOWER ("KATURAY")
BROWN NOTECARD	GREEN NOTECARD	WHITE NOTECARD
		
What is important for your journey in antiracism? What has been a foundation for you and your journey?	What are your strengths? The things you bring to the table or have experience with?	What areas of social justice would you like to see yourself get more involved in? How do you envision getting involved in these efforts?

Students were asked to write their responses on corresponding color-coded notecards. Responses written on brown and white notecards were collected for data analysis. Students were encouraged to keep their green notecards to serve as a reminder of their strengths as they embark on or continue their educational journey. By intentionally asking students to reflect on their strengths, we aim to shift the conceptualization of educational success away from the deficit thinking model. This shift in conversation can benefit our understanding on how to best support students from historically/currently marginalized communities and promote a sense of belonging (Smit, 2012).

Further data was collected from students of the PHE 511-Foundations of Public Health course. The students enrolled in this course were divided into two breakout groups and held group discussions to determine categories for the data. One group was tasked with sorting responses to the first group of questions, while the other sorted responses to the third group of questions. After spending time in their breakout groups, we had the class discuss their methods for categorizing responses, their findings, and responses that stood out to them. Students in this course were then tasked with sorting and analyzing all 145 responses on a shared document.

Our overarching goal for collecting feedback is to hold the School of Public Health accountable for becoming an antiracist institution, which includes:

1. Using the data to inform decisions around curriculum revisioning and integrate opportunities for strengthening advocacy skills necessary for community engagement/organizing efforts
2. Incorporate this activity across SPH courses to empower students and encourage their involvement with social justice
3. Engage students in decisions around improving the programmatic efforts of the Social Justice department and informing the need for ad-hoc social justice groups
4. Providing opportunities for continuous input on student needs and interests around antiracism (Kishimoto, 2018).

Learning objectives for the audience include:

1. Reflect on ways to incorporate activities for culturally relevant teaching
2. Understand how deficit thinking can further drive inequities and disempower students
3. Explore alternative ways for student data collection to improve programs

References

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