

Anti-Racism Statement

Immersions Office at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Racism and colonial thinking have no place in any society, government, business, office, or institution. The Immersions Office at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is committed to upholding anti-racist and anti-colonial perspectives, philosophies, and practices as the keystone of its mission of “providing opportunities [for students] to engage in intercultural experiences outside the classroom [and] offer students the opportunity to challenge and transform their perspectives regarding cultural norms and values.”

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF IMMERSION PROGRAMS

Immersion programs are historically rooted in colonial and cold war ideologies characterized by imperialism and racism. Traveling to another country or location to engage in experiential learning reflects the power, affluence, and privilege of those able to participate. **This power, affluence, and privilege disproportionately held by European / white populations have led to intentional and unintentional practices of extraction—land, natural resources, human labor, historical artifacts, and knowledge—on every scale imaginable.**

Institutions of higher education, like UW-Eau Claire, have routinely participated in extractive colonial practices—including the land upon which UW-Eau Claire situates itself. UW-Eau Claire’s Immersion programs must not reinforce this centuries-old system of extraction, but instead support collaboration, understanding, and respect. All Immersion programs must support anti-colonial and anti-racist pedagogies, practices, and perspectives and maintain the dignity of and respect for all of our partners, participants, and members of society with whom all UW-Eau Claire faculty, staff, and students interact while participating on Immersion programs.

WITH PRIVILEGE COMES RESPONSIBILITY

The Immersions Office recognizes the racialized status of all members of U.S. society (as White, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Colour) and how race manifests itself differently in the lived experiences of all human beings. Ending racist and colonialist thinking, practices, systems, and structures falls on the shoulders of the empowered. It is the charge of every Immersion program participant—student, faculty, and staff member—to recognize our privilege of participating and embrace our collective and individual responsibilities to resist racist, colonialist, sexist, and classist positions.

OPEN DOORS AND ONGOING SELF-CRITIQUE

To ensure that all Immersions programs promote greater equity for all participants and uphold anti-racist and anti-colonial pedagogies, practices, and perspectives, the

Immersions Office will continue to serve as an open, welcoming, and reflective space for all who wish to provide constructive critique about any program, act, activity, or implication that may be interpreted as racist, sexist, colonialist, or classist. By engaging in such critical dialogue, the Immersions Office can continually reassess its approaches, goals, and objectives to help ensure that Immersion programs avoid racist outcomes.