What Motivates Academics to Social Justice?

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The Education & Advocacy Committee is an initiative within the Department of Clinical and Health Psychology at the University of Florida created in November 2016 to build awareness around social justice topics. Monthly meetings are one hour long and touch on issues pertaining to diversity, both on a personal and professional level. Our broad goal is to provide opportunities for education and discussion to all members of our department, both to enhance knowledge and improve cultural competency.

**What?**

The Education and Advocacy Committee provides each student and faculty member with the tools to contribute to a holistic sense of health. By understanding and advocating for an individual’s identity, the context they inhabit, and the community they contribute to, we build a more compassionate and comprehensive approach to mental and physical health. This committee is the support we need to grow as people and professionals.

**Why?**

“Exposing students to new and varied perspectives, in both a safe and challenging way, has the potential power to create future teachers and therapists who seek to understand and advocate for those different from themselves.”

**Graduate Student Perspective:**

“The Education and Advocacy Committee provides each student and faculty member with the tools to contribute to a holistic sense of health. By understanding and advocating for an individual’s identity, the context they inhabit, and the community they contribute to, we build a more compassionate and comprehensive approach to mental and physical health. This committee is the support we need to grow as people and professionals.”

**Post-Doctoral Perspective:**

“As a post-doctoral associate, I am beginning to provide direct supervision for trainees while I continue to build on my own training. Within recent years, I have felt a personal need for increased action related to diversity training, and I have seen a similar need expressed by the trainees I work with as well. My involvement in the education and advocacy committee is both a personal attempt to continue to expand my own knowledge as well as an attempt to create greater opportunities for those just beginning their training—opportunities that I wish had existed when I entered graduate school six years ago.”

**Faculty Perspective:**

“Exposing students to new and varied perspectives, in both a safe and challenging way, has the potential power to create future teachers and therapists who seek to understand and advocate for those different from themselves.”

**How?**

**Aims:**

- Understanding diversity
- Safeguarding spaces
- Normalizing tools
- Building discussions
- Educating minds
- Promoting inclusiveness

**Actions:**

- Meetings
- Panels
- Normalizing podcasts
- Tools
- Discussions
- Questioning books

**What’s Next?**

- Discussion of *Hillbilly Elegy: A Family and Culture in Crisis* by J.D. Vance
- How to Navigate Complex Relationships in Therapy: Power Dynamics and Harassment
- Health and Mental Health in the Transgender Community
- How Poverty Affects Access to Health Care (paired with a food drive service event)

**Upcoming Topics:**

- Our focus has thus far been on classroom-based education and discussion, with the hopes of expanding perspectives and increasing conversation about diverse issues. However, as attendance has increased, we have realized the need to incorporate action items into this project as well. In the future, we hope to combine a panel about food insecurity in Alachua County with a food drive. Our goal is to continue to build opportunities for service into future sessions as well.

- The Citizen Psychologist: Understanding Local Politics

**Dissemination:**

- Social Justice Summit
- PHHP Diversity Day