

Report and Analysis

2020 IUPUI Social Justice Symposium Session

Hey! Stop skipping class

A heart to heart talk with IUPUI students about why and how social class is the hidden discriminator on campus and what we can do about it

“The same walling off those raced and gendered spaces create, the same prevention from contact with social capital-vested individuals, is present when someone doesn’t have enough money.”

--Rick Mask for his book *Social Capital 2.0*

“Is a university really inclusive that doesn’t validate custodians or [Aramark] food service dish washers as members of the campus community?”

-- paraphrased from Peter M. Magolda in *The Lives of Campus Custodians*

Saturday, February 1, over 50 students, guests, and faculty from IUPUI and Ivy Tech attended the presentation, ‘Hey! Stop skipping class: A heart to heart talk with IUPUI students about why and how social class is the hidden discriminator on campus and what we can do about it.’

The session by John Harris Loflin (Southeast Working Class Task Force [SEW-CTF] and the Black & Latino Policy Institute [B&LPI]) and Gayle Cosby (IUPUI Urban Ed PhD Program student) was presented during the 2020 IUPUI Social Justice Symposium: Awareness, Advocacy and Activism.

Here is the link to the SEW-CTF/B&LPI proposal to the student organizers of the symposium:

[2020 IUPUI Social Justice Symposium Hey! Stop skipping class: A heart to heart talk with IUPUI students about why and how social class is the hidden discriminator on campus and what to do about it.](#) Here’s the session’s PowerPoint: [2020 IUPUI Social Justice Symposium PowerPoint Hey! Stop Skipping Class Issues and Solutions of Classism on Campus](#)

As stated in “Assessing Classism in Academic Settings” by Langhout, Rosselli, & Feinstein, classism is a type of discrimination, much like sexism or racism. In the case of classism, people occupying lower social class levels are treated in ways that exclude, devalue, discount, and separate them.

The intention of the session was to develop awareness of class as the hidden discriminatory factor on the IUPUI campus and is experienced by students, staff, and employees in the form of bias, stereotypes and prejudice. This is done by:

- raising consciousness on issues affecting students and their peers
- helping students understand their own class privilege or acts of class discrimination
- developing cultural understanding of the impact of the intersectionality of class with such factors as color, gender, ability, religion, ethnicity, age or veteran status
- establish a student-led group to advance the ideas/recommendations of symposium workshop

Ideas from attendees: Issues/What needs to change!

1. We don’t have diversity in the classrooms from a professor standpoint. About 90% is white.
2. People expect you to know things because of our skin color, accent, culture, hair, nails, etc.
3. People make assumption.
4. People have to acknowledge their ignorance
5. Student involvement is not inclusive of those who are working – differences in social capital.
6. Group projects do not take into account those are working full time – maybe a weekend study space that provides daycare to help working/non-traditional students
7. Free book rental.
8. Need based housing
9. Lower prices of apartments
10. Housing payment plans have very restrictive punishments.

11. Campus eating expensive and no place to store food
12. Financial aid doesn't always work.
13. Scholarships can be restrictive to students who have more student involvement.
14. Textbooks are too expensive - professors need to allow for more affordable textbooks
15. Transportation needs to be more dependable – get students' opinion on solutions. Parking (add it to tuition, allow for scholarships to help pay)
16. Food – cheaper alternatives and healthier. Freshman meal plans should not be mandatory!!!
17. Being supportive of those who are silent/uncomfortable in class and seek to find out why
18. Breaking the stigma around discussing class
19. Students who do not have a place to stay when class is not in session (can't stay in dorms)
20. The expectation of having a phone for everything—you basically need to get/have a job
21. Textbooks with access codes that can only be used once
22. Expensive textbooks
23. Expectations that students have a car or have access to someone who can drive them
24. Western society is so entrenched in individualistic ideology, we fail to feel comfortable/willing to share class status and one's own needs. When we do share, there a sense of shame
25. Rugged individualism causes this idea: if help is offered, it would be rude/demeaning to accept
26. Students have to have a computer (in syllabus)
27. No free time—working full time and going to school: professors not taking considering this
28. Profs don't care—lack of interest
29. Poverty is an issue on campus where 45% of students are food insecure
30. The campus and the greater campus area is a food desert
 - FYI: there is a Kroger grocery at 227 W. Michigan
31. Educate more about classism
32. Have mandatory diversity training all levels, students, professor, staff (faculty), custodians
33. Attend more social justice events
34. Having more people that understand our situations
35. Having more funding for cultural events/organization – without several requirements
36. Professors information form to inform problem
37. On-line classes
38. Poor Student's Union
39. Adjunct Faculty Union

Ideas from PowerPoint presentation;

- Social class defined: The amount of control over what you do at work
- Children as young as 5 are aware of class, so why isn't IUPUI?

“So thinking about education and occupations and income and wealth. We think if we don't draw attention to it, then maybe kids won't think that it's important. In fact, what we know is, it's the opposite.” <https://www.wmcactionnews5.com/2020/01/01/best-life-kids-recognize-social-class-early-life/>
- Indy is segregated by both race and class: the demographics south of Washington St (Indy's Mason-Dixon line) is mainly working class whites. See 2010 census map at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/walkingsf/5560477952/in/album-72157626354149574/>
- IUPUI Climate Surveys and Diversity Reports do not mention the term “class.”
- Due to racism, sexism, ableism, etc., there are 2 definitions of success--one for the poor and one for the wealthy
 - for the wealthy is how close you live to where you grew up
 - for the poor is how far away you live from where you grew up
- The unseen reason working-class students drop out: We must expand the culture of higher education to include interdependence as well as independence
 - IUPUI can consider:
 - *“In our studies, we find that doing something as simple as revising a university welcome message to include concepts of interdependence (e.g., be part of a*

community) leads working-class students to perform just as well as their socio-economically advantaged peers on an academic task.”

- amending their websites, orientation materials, and student guidebooks to incorporate the value of community and interdependence, instead of only advocating for values of independence.
- emphasize the value of group learning, and actively promote a community of peers, connecting all students to the support of advisors and mentors.
- Adding class to the list of categories that the division of diversity used to define diversity
- Making campus more welcoming—more community centered
- Have campus workers recognition day
- Culturally Sustainable Pedagogy
- Student-led group to analyze and suggest solutions
- De-colonize IUPUI and its campus
- What about discussions around both the campus privileges of students of wealth as well as stereotypes and discrimination towards them?
- A variety of epistemologies beyond Western epistemologies
- Custodial staff, maintenance staff, food services workers as part of diversity at IUPI and the campus matrix of student support
 - “...failing to recognize and benefit from the wisdom of the life-experiences of custodians represent squandered learning opportunities to the detriment of the entire campus community.” --Peter M. Magolda
- Campus lecturers [professors] from working class background should come out of the closet
 - “Too many poorer students feel they don’t fit in at university. We need more academics proud to be from a similar background.” -- Melanie Reynolds 09. 20.18 *The Guardian*
- Need meeting to go more in-depth discussions around the PowerPoint
- Poverty is an issue at IUPUI reflected in the need and creation of campus Paws Pantry and Paws Closet spaces.
- Expand “First in family to graduate” recognition event
 - On November 8, 2019, colleges and universities across the United States observed the third annual National First-Generation College Celebration Day by recognizing the successes of faculty, staff, and students who are the first in their families to earn a college degree.
 - At University of Washington Tacoma (UW Tacoma), the campus celebrated the first-generation identity through a weeklong series of events focused on sharing stories and providing communal support.

Expand Economic Indicators: Current level of information on socio-economic diversity is insufficient.

Understand 2016 & 2018 diversity report includes statistical information about social class through posting the number and percent of students who are Pell Grant recipients, 21st Century Scholars and First Generation students.

Fall Undergraduate Enrollment - Socio-economic Indicators 2010-2015

- Pell Grant Receivers 9292 39%
- 21st Century Scholars 2192 10%
- First Generation 7022 32%

What to do?

- At minimum, disaggregate data by race, gender, and class providing insight into the data
- Breakdown of yearly salary/hourly wages of *all* campus employees (from IUPI president to both faculty and adjunct faculty, secretaries, maintenance, custodial, and dishwashers by race, gender, age easily and transparently available on campus website so the campus and public are aware and responsible, and can add their input into the situation.

Use College Factual data in reports [What College Factual says about economic diversity on the IUPUI campus: How is IUPUI doing at attracting students from all economic backgrounds.](#) The College Factual study shows IUPUI students with income levels over \$110K getting aid. It's not what poor students get, but it is aid. This provides an example of the value of a more in-depth view of how class can be under-stood on the IUPUI campus.

Have a Stop Skipping Class Campaign

- It's important to recognize the ways in which we skip class and poverty in our discussions with and about our universities, colleagues and students.
- Increase the visibility and voice of academics/Profs from lower-socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds particularly when such teachers might be motivated to conceal their status

Make Advisory Council more diverse

IUPUI's Board of Advisors has these committees:

- Academic Programs and Student Life Committee
- Corporate, Alumni, and Community Relations Committee (CACRC)
- Development Committee
- Executive Committee
- Special Committee
- Add campus students' concerns re: Socio-Economic Status issues and solutions to the Student Life Committee
- If CACRC has corporate representation, then so must unions (both labor and professional) to be inclusive. Unions leaders are "community leaders" too.
- "Corporate, Union, Alumni, and Community Relations Committee" is a more diverse, responsible and inclusive name and orientation
- Scour the admissions process for any traps, pot holes, dead ends fair, equitable and transparent
- Have an IUPUI/Ivy Tech working-class student coalition to look out for mutual interests
- Look into campus studies using [The poor and working class college students Challenges and Resiliency Factors Scale](#) of Rebecca Reed
 - Factors such as classism, finances, communications, academic cultural navigations, personal relationships, social desirability, self-esteem, stress, resiliency were all negatively affected by campus classism. Social class encompasses the preferences, lifestyles, and behaviors of people in various social class groups in conjunction with the structural privileges that accompany certain social locations.
 - Class-privileged college students typically come to campus with greater amounts of cultural capital that afford them the luxury of understanding how to navigate the middle-class environment of college.
 - Students from poor/working-class backgrounds are, on the other hand, often without the benefit of knowing the behavioral codes and expectations of college, which can lead to negative psychological outcomes in the form of lowered self-esteem, depression, and stress.
 - As a construct, resiliency provides a framework for understanding how some poor/working-class students are able to succeed despite these potential negative outcomes and persist through college. The study aimed to measure the class-related challenges and resiliency factors that correspond to different levels of psychological outcomes using a scale called the Poor/Working-Class Challenge and Resiliency Factor Scale

John Harris Loflin
Chair

Southeast Working-Class Task Force
Director of Education and Youth Issues
Black & Latino Policy Institute

johnharrisloflin@yahoo.com

317.998.1339

Submitted February 11, 2020