

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee  
Shirley Jefferson, Chair  
Bill Lippert, Vice Chair  
Betsy Bloomer  
Megan Cluver  
Bob Flint  
Jim Masland  
Perry Ragouzis

FROM: Kathryn Santiago, Associate General Counsel *K. Santiago*

DATE: January 4, 2024

SUBJECT: DEI Committee Meeting January 8, 2024

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The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee of the Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet on Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. by Zoom.

The focus for this meeting will be for the committee is to receive an introduction to VTSU's new Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Oyibo Afoaku; receive an educational presentation via "Chat and Chew" format entitled "Calling-In vs. Calling-Out" by CCV's Dean of People and Culture, Mary Brodsky; and receive an introduction to the anticipated formation of a VSC Student Association DEI Committee by Perry Ragouzis, Board of Trustees.

In preparation for the committee's discussion, in the accompanying materials please find the DEI Committee meeting minutes of October 30, 2023, an introduction to "Chat and Chew", an article entitled "Speaking up without Tearing Down", and an article entitled "Language Policing Intent vs. Impact and Calling In." The educational presentation will include a facilitated conversation based upon these articles.

I can be reached directly at (802) 224-3012 if you have any questions. Thank you.

Cc: VSCS Board of Trustees  
Council of Presidents  
Academic Deans  
HR Council  
Student Affairs Council

**Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees  
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Meeting  
Zoom Meeting/YouTube Stream**

**Monday, January 8, 2024 at 11:00 a.m.**

**AGENDA**

**11:00 A.M.** – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Meeting

1. Call to Order
  2. Public Comment – sign up here: [www.vsc.edu/signup](http://www.vsc.edu/signup)<sup>1</sup>
  3. Approval of Meeting Minutes
    - a. October 30, 2023 DEI Committee Meeting
  4. Welcome Vermont State University’s new Chief Diversity Officer
  5. Educational Presentation entitled “Calling-In vs. Calling-Out”
  6. Introduction to anticipated formation of Student Government Association’s DEI Committee
  7. Additional Business
  8. Adjourn
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- Contact Jen Porrier at [jen.porrier@vsc.edu](mailto:jen.porrier@vsc.edu) for information on how to attend the Zoom meeting
  - This will also be livestreamed on YouTube at [www.vsc.edu/live](http://www.vsc.edu/live)

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<sup>1</sup> Note: To make a comment you must be logged into the live session at <https://www.vsc.edu/botzoom>. Please test your microphone and camera before logging into the session.

## MEETING MATERIALS

- Item 1: October 30, 2023 Minutes for Approval
- Item 2: “Chat and Chew”
- Item 3: “Speaking up without Tearing Down” by Loretta J. Ross
- Item 4: “Language Policing Intent vs. Impact and Calling In” by Loretta J. Ross

ITEM 1:  
October 30, 2023 Minutes

**Minutes of the VSCS Board of Trustees Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee meeting held Monday, October 30, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom - UNAPPROVED**

*Note: These are unapproved minutes, subject to amendment and/or approval at the subsequent meeting.*

The VSCS Board of Trustees Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee met on Monday, October 30, 2023 via Zoom.

Committee Members present: Shirley Jefferson (Chair), Betsy Bloomer, Megan Cluver (11:40 a.m.), Bob Flint, Perry Ragouzis

Absent: Bill Lippert, Jim Masland

Other Trustees Present: Lynn Dickinson, David Durfee, Karen Luneau, Sue Zeller

Presidents: Joyce Judy, Mike Smith (Interim)

Chancellor's Office Staff: Jen Porrier, Administrative Director  
Sophie Zdatny, Chancellor  
Yasmine Ziesler, Chief Academic Officer

Shared Services: Donny Bazluke, Network/Security Analyst  
Kellie Campbell, Chief Information Officer  
Sarah Chambers, Director of Learning Technologies, Vermont State University  
Sarah Potter, Chief Human Resources Officer  
Kathryn Santiago, Associate General Counsel  
Sharron Scott, Chief Financial & Operating Officer  
Patty Turley, General Counsel  
Meg Walz, Director, Project Management

From the Colleges: Kelley Beckwith, Vice President of Student Success, Vermont State University  
Karry Booska, Director of Career Development, Vermont State University  
Mary Brodsky, Dean of People and Culture, Community College of Vermont  
Rich Clark, Faculty, Vermont State University  
Aurora Hurd, Assistant Director of DEISJ Outreach and Accountability, Vermont State University

Denise Rhodes, Student Financial Support Specialist, Vermont State University  
Sarah Truckle, Vice President, Business Operations, Vermont State University  
Beth Walsh, Co-President, VSCUP, Vermont State University

1. Call to Order

Chair Jefferson called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

2. Public Comment

Professor Clark raised several issues of concern, including the lack of a DEI representative on the Castleton campus for a year, the Supreme Court's recent rulings on race conscious admissions, the quality of the annual compliance courses, and the perceived failure of Vermont State University in making real strides to address structural racism, rather than performative acts and empty promises. Beth Walsh provided a comment stating that stabilizing the Vermont State Colleges in an equity issue. Ms. Walsh felt that our state cannot adequately serve our citizens if the efforts to right-size our campuses, faculty, staff, and administration make it impossible to function.

3. Update on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) at the Community College of Vermont

CCV's Dean of People and Culture Mary Brodsky shared an update on activities since the May 5<sup>th</sup> committee meeting. Dean Brodsky stated that five new members have been appointed to CCV's DEI committee, four of whom are students. The committee of eleven is comprised of students, faculty and staff and all appointments are made by President Judy. CCV's DEI committee meets monthly. The committee has reaffirmed CCV's top three DEI priorities: building their cultural foundation; providing student support and resources to promote inclusivity; and establishing and strengthening community engagements. CCV offers a non-credit DEI course called Foundations of Equity and Inclusion. All members of the President's Council have taken the course. In the spring a modified version will be offered to CCV faculty. CCV has also held "chat and chew" events, the most recent of which was focused on what is happening with Israel and Hamas. A BIPOC Student Affinity Group, open to both CCV and VTSU students, offers a safe space for BIPOC students and their allies to meet and connect across disciplines. A communication about an upcoming meeting will be sent out shortly.

4. Update on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Social Justice (DEISJ) at Vermont State University

Assistant Director of DEISJ Outreach and Accountability at VTSU, Aurora Hurd, gave an update on successes and challenges of the DEISJ department. Their presentation can be found [here](#). In addition, Aurora shared that they have been meeting with Professor Clark and Kayon Morgan (student leader of Castleton's NAACP Chapter) every couple of weeks to address their concerns. Vermont State University is currently negotiating with a candidate to fill the position of Chief

Diversity Officer. Aurora recently attended an event with the State Office of Racial Equity and is working on a climate survey to be released either this semester or in the spring.

5. Update on student proposed Anti-Racism Pledge at VTSU

Student Trustee Perry Ragouzis shared some historical context on the development of the Anti-Racism Pledge. Trustee Ragouzis stated that three years ago, the students of Community College of Vermont, Castleton University, Northern Vermont University and Vermont Technical College formed a coalition to promote anti racism within the VSC in a grassroots fashion. The pledge was developed by the students, then approved by the Board in May of 2021. The goal was to share the pledge with students, faculty, and staff system-wide for their signature and commitment to the goals of the pledge. As students have graduated, there has been a delay in launching the pledge but the hope is to launch the pledge this academic year system-wide. Trustee Ragouzis is planning to schedule meetings with the Chancellor and the Presidents to discuss their interest in providing a statement about the importance of anti-racism that can be shared with the pledge.

6. Approval of Meeting Minutes  
a. January 18, 2023  
b. May 5, 2023

**Trustee Cluver moved and Trustee Ragouzis seconded the motion to approve the January 18, 2023 and May 5, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was approved with one abstention.**

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

Chair Jefferson adjourned the meeting at 11:49 a.m.

ITEM 2:  
Chat and Chew



## **“CHAT AND CHEW” -CCV**

**What is Chat and Chew?** It’s an informal conversation that allows us to discuss issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Materials are sent out in advance (generally a short-ish article or podcast) to inform the conversation.

**Who can attend?** Everyone is welcome. DEI work connects to the work of all CCV staff. We still have much to accomplish at CCV and in our country, but we want to continue and be part of the work. Please join us to contribute to this work and further the conversations. Here is a great quote shared by DEI Committee Member Ashraf Alamatouri: “America may not be the best nation on earth, but it has conceived loftier ideals and dreamed higher dreams than any other nation. America is a heterogeneous nation of many different people of different races, religions, and creeds. Should this experiment go forth and prosper, we will have offered humans a new way to look at life; should it fail, we will simply go the way of all failed civilizations.” ~ Nikki Giovanni

**I am a bit nervous. Are you sure I can attend?** Conversations about DEI can be exciting, eye-opening, transformative, and sometimes challenging. There is no expectation to share. No question is a bad question but it is assumed that all questions are asked with sincerity and good intention.

### **Chat and Chew Community Norms and Understandings**

1. We are here in the spirit of friendship and community. Hate has no home here.
2. We will listen for understanding. We will address each other with respect and kindness. We will practice empathy.
3. We may choose to be vulnerable because we have confidence that our stories and feelings will not be gossiped about with others.
4. We will seek ways to find and share joy with each other.
5. We understand and agree that at a minimum, anyone who violates these norms and understandings will have to leave the meeting.

ITEM 3:

“Speaking up without Tearing Down” by Loretta J. Ross



Magazine Feature

## SPEAKING UP WITHOUT TEARING DOWN

A veteran human rights educator explains the value of teaching students to call each other in rather than out.

By Loretta J. Ross | Issue 61, Spring 2019

Bookmarked 115 times

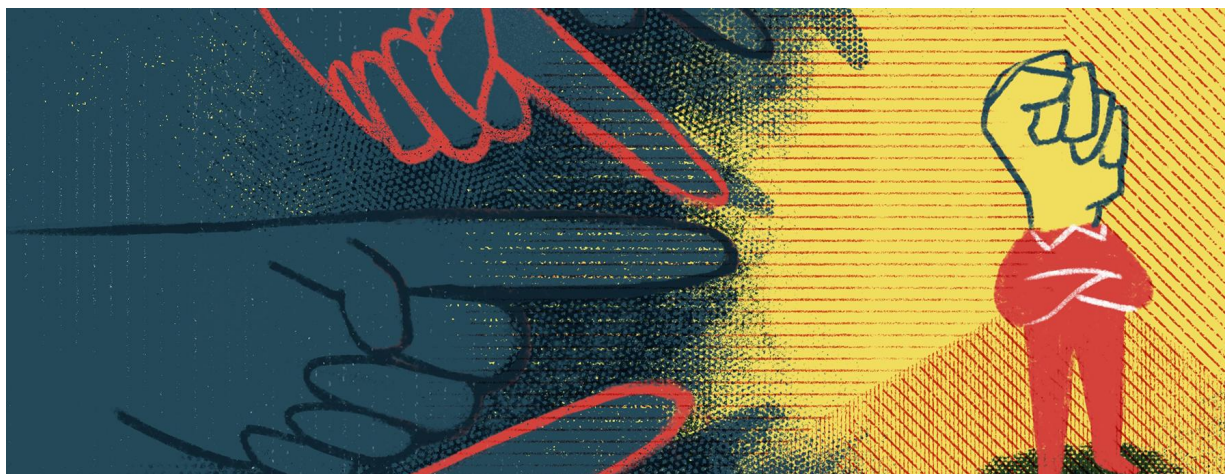


Illustration by Luisa Jung

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It's a moment most educators will recognize: A student has said something biased or promoted a stereotype. There's a ripple through the classroom, but the speaker hasn't noticed. Students look to you expectantly, and you know the statement can't go unaddressed.

Most teachers look for opportunities to build a human rights culture and to counter hatred, bigotry, fear-mongering and intolerance. One way to do this, when students make a mistake, is to call them *in* rather than calling them *out*. Doing so prepares them for civic engagement by encouraging a sense of hope and possibility.

# GUIDING INSTEAD OF DRAGGING

In conversations and debates about social justice issues, insisting someone take responsibility when they say or do something hurtful—regardless of their intent—is a common way to protect vulnerable communities and individuals. It's often necessary, but not every correction allows both parties to move forward. Calling out happens when we point out a mistake, not to address or rectify the damage, but instead to publicly shame the offender. In calling out, a person or group uses tactics like humiliation, shunning, scapegoating or gossip to dominate others.

In our society, call-outs have become a way of life. They are generally done publicly, either in person or online. Extreme calling out is when a person or a group expresses their disagreement cruelly, sometimes grandstanding. Fearing they may be considered politically backward if they don't prove their "wokeness" on trending social justice issues, witnesses to the conflict may pile on while bystanders silently withdraw.

Calling in is a technique that *does* allow all parties to move forward. It's a concept created by human-rights practitioners to challenge the toxicity of call-out culture. Calling in is speaking up without tearing down. A call-in can happen publicly or privately, but its key feature is that it's done with love. Instead of shaming someone who's made a mistake, we can patiently ask questions to explore what was going on and why the speaker chose their harmful language.

Call-ins are agreements between people who work together to consciously help each other expand their perspectives. They encourage us to recognize our requirements for growth, to admit our mistakes and to commit to doing better. Calling in cannot minimize harm and trauma already inflicted, but it can get to the root of why the injury occurred, and it can stop it from happening again.

Calling in is not for everyone or every circumstance. It's not fair, for example, to insist that people hurt by cruel or careless language or actions be responsible for the personal growth of those who have injured them; calling in should not demand involuntary emotional labor.

Calling in is also not a useful response to those who intentionally violate standards of civil conversation. When powerful people use bigotry, fear and lies to attack others, calling out can be a valuable tool, either for the individuals they seek to oppress or for bystanders who choose to interrupt the encounter. When people knowingly use stereotypes or dehumanizing metaphors to describe human beings, their actions victimize targets and potentially set them up for violence. Calling out may be the best response to those who refuse to accept



responsibility for the harm they encourage or who pretend they are only innocently using their right to free speech.

But, if call-ins can occur without demanding undue emotional labor or allowing space for hateful behavior, this approach offers a way forward that increases the potential for learning—particularly in activist and academic spaces. This practice works especially well when allies call one another in or when leaders, such as teachers, use it to model speaking up without losing the opportunity for learning. By teaching our students how to call one another in, we're

providing them the tools and skills they need to gather up those who share their privileges, to offer patience and grace when they can, and to facilitate growth—so others won't have to.

**"It's not fair to insist that people hurt by cruel or careless language or actions be responsible for the personal growth of those who have injured them."**

## WHY CLASSROOMS ARE MADE FOR CALLING IN

Teaching calling-in practices means teaching students techniques to avoid escalating conflicts and to relate to each other in affirming ways. When we teach call-in skills, we create what we need for ourselves and our students: brave spaces in which everyone understands that people make mistakes, that people come from diverse cultures and languages that may use words differently, and that people should not be punished for not knowing the right words to say. When we call students out instead of building a call-in culture in the classroom, we contribute to increasingly toxic and polarized conversations. And we make learning less inviting.

In class discussions, for example, the concept of privilege frequently becomes a source of call-outs, since privilege isn't always apparent to those who have it.

But educators can build space for a culture that relies on calling classmates in instead of publicly shaming them.

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## HOW TO START A CALL-IN CONVERSATION

“I need to stop you there because something you just said is not accurate.”

“I’m having a reaction to that comment. Let’s go back for a minute.”

“Do you think you would say that if someone from that group was with us in the room?”

“There’s some history behind that expression you just used that you might not know about.”

“In this class, we hold each other accountable. So we need to talk about why that joke isn’t funny.”

In a classroom with a call-in culture, for example, a white student denying white privilege by pointing out how hard his parents worked is regarded first as a classmate who’s not understanding, not as a member of a privileged class refusing to acknowledge his advantages. The student’s statement offers an opportunity for peers to teach one another, for example, by asking if he has ever had the experience of being stopped by the police for no reason while walking down the street. This question—a form of calling in—encourages the student to rethink his position. It highlights the experience of the student rather than labeling him with an identity he’s not open to. Most importantly, it helps clarify a key misunderstanding by helping show the student that privilege doesn’t necessarily mean a lavish lifestyle, and that privilege and hard work aren’t mutually exclusive.

Calling in is not a guarantee that everyone will joyfully work together. It is simply the extension of grace, the opportunity to grow and to share learning and responsibility for each other.

## BUILDING A CALL-IN CULTURE

Calling someone in effectively requires preparation. The first step for educators is a self-assessment to prepare ourselves for effective engagements. This inventory might include writing and practicing some sentence starters, taking

stock of which students tend to trigger or irritate us, and checking in with ourselves daily to assess the status of our emotional bandwidth.

While class discussions offer ample opportunities for calling students in, the technique shouldn't just be reactive. There are many ways that educators can create a space where calling in is the norm, where students feel comfortable calling one another in and where they don't shut down when they themselves are called in by their peers.

## Practice Calling In

When someone is called in, they may still have the same reactions as if they were called out. They may feel panicked, ashamed, combative, upset or attacked. But letting students practice calling their peers in—and being called in—helps them see that mistakes can be an opportunity to learn something new and get a fresh perspective. When we let students practice calling in, we teach them how to distinguish between people who are intentionally hurtful and those who are trying to figure out how to understand or talk about differences.

One effective exercise I've used is "Human Rights in the Headlines." Students bring copies of their local newspaper to class and are asked to select a story about something they believe is unfair. There will inevitably be differences of opinion about whatever is said, and these provide the opportunity for students to practice their call-in techniques. For example, questions such as, "I don't think I understand what you're saying, so can we talk some more?" or "Can we stop and explore what is happening now?" allow the asker to seek clarification and calm tensions.

## Discuss Call-out Culture

One way to help students distinguish calling in from calling out is to ask what call-out culture looks like for them. You can also ask them to list and define specialized terms commonly used to justify call-outs like "trigger" or "microaggression." Take time to discuss these terms. For example, you can explain that—despite how the word is casually used today—being "triggered" means being trapped in the memory of a past trauma, not just feeling uncomfortable. Ask students to consider the difference between aggressive behavior and a microaggression—both in terms of intent and impact. Explain that, if no one calls in an offender about a microaggression, they only have their own intentions to rely on going forward and will likely offend others. Talking about call-out culture before anyone is called in or out can help students understand why calling in is part of your classroom expectations.

You can continue this conversation by asking students to compare the effects of call-outs and call-ins. Calling out is intended to shame, encouraging others to exclude the person called out without any discussion of details that may shed light on what the conflict may actually be. Calling people out shuts down listening and escalates the conflict. Calling in prevents differences in understanding from escalating into conflict. It means exploring the underlying issues precipitating a situation. Given the difference in results, you may ask students to contemplate why so many people choose to participate in call-out culture.

## Look for Curricular Spaces for Calling In White Students

In my college courses on white supremacy, I teach a concept called “appropriate whiteness” to discuss new forms of knowledge and history and to explore different ways whiteness may be lived. Appropriate whiteness occurs when white people can be proud of themselves and their ethnic backgrounds without falling into the trap of white supremacy (for example, neglecting a history of enslavement and oppression to pretend the Confederate flag is simply about heritage).

Calling in helps to dismantle a culture of white guilt and shame and helps transform fear into positive actions that center on the white community calling each other in. Helping white students talk about their race and explore their implicit biases aids them in learning how to complicate the concept of identity. It lets them practice participating in honest conversations without falling back on white fragility—or avoiding the topic of race altogether.

Learning about the ways in which they are privileged doesn’t need to be an exercise in guilt and shame for students. Learning to call one another in—and to respond to being called in with a sincere desire to do and be better—can help students feel good about committing themselves to a more just world and gives them another tool to build it.

*Ross is a feminist human rights educator and visiting college professor. This article is a preview of her latest book, Calling In the Calling Out Culture: Detoxing Our Movement, which will be published by Routledge in 2019.*

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**ITEM 4:**

**“Language Policing Intent vs. Impact and Calling In” by Loretta J. Ross**

## **Language Policing Intent vs. Impact and Calling In**

*Loretta J. Ross*

*Activist. Public Intellectual. Professor.*

Imagine you suddenly face a pop quiz on the correct word to use. No one warned about the test, you didn't have a chance to study in advance, and the person grading the test has the subjective power to decide if you pass or fail depending on what they believe is the correct answer at the time. Of course, they could be wrong or outdated themselves, but that doesn't matter. What matters is whether they can criticize you or, in other words, call you out by publicly humiliating you.

This type of calling out is relevant to the debate over intent vs. impact because often, people use words not intending to cause harm but are accused of doing so simply because the words they chose didn't conform to someone else's idea of acceptability. Language policing feels like it's doing something important but is sometimes unintelligible even to the people we're trying to support. This behavior is often a situation of unverifiable harm through which trauma is weaponized. It's more a powerplay rather than substantive changes in oppressive structures. People who don't comply may be called racist, sexist, transphobic, etc. as if name-calling ever changed anyone's mind.

The patchwork of appropriate language is constantly evolving. Yet, many people who believe they are genuinely progressive also think they are acting appropriately as language supervisors, establishing rigid guardrails against harm caused by people who are insufficiently au courant. It has become a form of virtue signaling one's political purity much more than it indicates a desire to be kind and inclusive. In some ways, we're calling ourselves out for not being sufficiently aware. Such practices are both understood and misunderstood.

As punishment, these behaviors often repel people rather than invite them into

conversations that could help them become aware of their many choices that convey a commitment not to cause accidental harm to others. Instead of asking people to share their values, critics force them to defend their lived experiences when they feel attacked. And what happens when they don't share the critics' values? For instance, what if they prefer to call themselves a "pregnant woman" rather than a "pregnant person?"

Shall we alienate them when their values about terminology don't align with someone else's? Should a degree in gender studies be required to work with the human rights movement? Is our language inclusive if most people need help understanding us? We should not rationalize the harm we do and should try to prevent more alienation. I know it isn't easy to converse with people who won't accept information unless it affirms what they already believe. But we have choices, and we're developing new tools.

Calling In is the practice of giving people the benefit of the doubt. It assumes the best of people, not the worst. It also asserts that we are capable of growth but that we will do so when that's right for us, not someone else's timeline. As adrienne maree brown says, we move "at the speed of trust." If we call someone out for not knowing the latest word or phrase to use, we've destroyed their belief that we will handle their feelings as if we held their hearts in our hands.

Language policing is why intent vs. impact matters. If someone intentionally seeks to harm another, the Calling In may focus on why they want to hurt someone rather than what they did. If they intended no harm, the focus could be on how your experiences can help them grow instead of using your experiences as a weapon against them. It's all about how you want to show up in the world. Calling In is always about you, not them.