

Vredenburg Lab Anti-Racism Statement

The Vredenburg laboratory is committed to being a safe, supportive, and anti-racist environment in which students from diverse racial, ethnic, gender, sexuality, socio-economic, and other backgrounds are equally and inclusively supported in their education and training. We strive to eliminate unconscious biases, micro-aggressions, and other forms of unintended discrimination through sustained communication, empathy, continuous learning and understanding.

In the event that there are any instances of racist behavior or communication, whether intended or unintended, all members of the Vredenburg Laboratory agree to the following expectations.

In the event of a racist incident please follow at least one of these avenues:

- Speak up when the incident happens, even in front of others. Bystanders are encouraged to speak up in support of persons who experienced microaggression or injustice. It is OK if this interrupts whatever else is being discussed at the time.
- Communicate privately with the person who displayed the racist behavior or communication - may be verbal or written.
- Talk to the PI (Dr. Vredenburg) about the incident, which will then be followed by a group discussion.
- Talk to another member of the laboratory about the incident for advice on how to approach the person who displayed the racist behavior or communication. If you remain uncomfortable communicating your concerns directly, talk to Dr. Swei or Dr. Vredenburg.

Any of these options are welcomed, all have pros and cons, and you should choose whatever is most comfortable for you. The main message here is that if there is communication that makes lab members feel “unequal,” even if they seem like minor or isolated incidents, they need to be addressed so that the behavior can be changed. We grow through learning the impacts that our actions have on others! If something happens to you, or you witness something that makes you uncomfortable, we will all be grateful if you tell someone. You will not experience any negative consequences of telling us about an incident of racism you experience or witness in the lab, department, or wider campus community. We are here to support each other!

What happens when a lab member is reprimanded for racist behavior?

In most cases, if the lab member accepts the feedback openly and does their best to address the problematic behavior, there will be no further consequences. We learn from our mistakes. The culture of openly addressing racism needs to continue to change towards dismantling structural racism. Doing so may be uncomfortable, but we will grow stronger as a community as a result. Criticism of your behavior does not devalue your importance to our lab. However, if it becomes clear that a member of our lab is not learning from their mistakes, and not interested

in changing their racist behavior, the offending lab member may lose the privilege of interacting with lab members in group settings, including lab meetings and social events, and likely additional consequences to be determined, likely including a required meeting with the Chair of the Biology graduate program and/or the Chair of the Biology department.

Accepting critical feedback with gratitude and openness.

When a lab member gives you critical feedback, take a deep breath, and trust that the feedback is an offering given with good intentions, not an attack. Remember that your self-worth is not on trial. Listen and ask questions if necessary to understand the true meaning. Focus on the substantive content of the feedback and save your critiques of how the feedback is brought (tone, medium, phrasing, etc). Ask yourself “if this were true, what would it mean?”. Allow yourself time to process (“Wow, I’m grateful for but also overwhelmed by this feedback. I need time to process what you’ve shared. Can we talk again tomorrow?”). Offer a clear apology for the unintended impact that your words had on another member of our lab group (e.g. Do not apologize for how someone feels by saying “I’m sorry you’re upset” because it does not take accountability for your actions. Instead say: “I’m sorry I did X that had Y impact on you.”). We all learn from each other and our strength is in our diversity. Here is a great article about receiving critical feedback:

<https://medium.com/@brookeanderson/10-tips-on-receiving-critical-feedback-a-guide-for-activists-e51689c59d81>