**Description:** Members of a group like AVDS will often be asked to answer difficult questions on the fly in situations such as talking to administration or presenting the group’s work. Because this work can be very complex, it’s important to present a unified message when representing your group in order to reduce confusion. Therefore, we have put together a list of common questions we run across and how to respond to them.

## What should we do to improve racial equity in our community?

This is the most common question and it can be surprisingly difficult to answer because the answer is to do the hard work required to shift culture, which is not the simple solution people are hoping to hear. You can flip this question and ask people how they define racial equity (numbers vs actual inclusion)? What have they done so far? Have they felt that it worked? How do they/would they measure success? The answer to this question will be largely based on where an institution is at. If they are just starting to tackle this question then maybe they need a climate survey, community engagement work, etc; if they have been working on racial equity for a period of time then maybe they’ll need a different approach.

## Why is it problematic to measure diversity simply by the number of BIPOC faculty or students?

People who are new to this work often think that one obvious strategy to promote racial equity is to simply hire more BIPOC people. However, this doesn't speak to the importance of *inclusivity* in the work place. You can't just bring BIPOC into a white space and expect them not to be subjected to racism; you have to work to make sure the environment functions in a way that doesn't perpetuate white supremacy in order to ensure the success of BIPOC hires. AVDS therefore believes that establishing a supportive environment should take priority over recruitment.

## How does diversity benefit science? Why is diversity important?

The answer to this question is "google it." Typically when we are speaking to an audience we are operating under an assumption that they either understand why diversity is important or should take their own time to come to understanding if not. There is plenty of literature that describes what the problem is that you can familiarize yourself with. But we are focused on solutions. Furthermore, even if diversity did not benefit science, which it does, it's a disturbing question that shows that the person asking the question cares more about how minoritized populations can benefit them rather than their innate humanity and human rights.

## What are examples of DEI strategies that don't work well?

* Required implicit bias training that’s held online with no metrics for assessing changes in attitudes following training
* Strategies that are purely performative and only contribute to the image that the institution cares about diversity
* "Diversity" scholarships and benefits that largely end up going to white women

## What are examples of systemic racism in academia?

* GRE requirement: the standardized test for graduate school admission is the GRE. Good score=better chance of acceptance. A recent study has shown that the GRE correlates poorly with academic success, and correlates more strongly with socioeconomic status. Now that we understand that using GRE to grant admission is discriminatory, many schools are moving away from using it in their admission process. A bandaid solution for helping people with low SES might be to start free test preparation programs. However, from a system’s perspective, the GRE is effectively acting as a tool to uphold white supremacy by restricting access to higher ed, so the GRE requirement should just be removed entirely, which is what many schools have done
* Peer review - recent study shows that NIH consistently underfunds minority researchers
* Recruitment of faculty and graduate students: candidates who are racially, ethnically, and/or culturally outside of the sphere of whiteness are expected to assimilate into academic culture as opposed to being integrated. Recruiters will often voice concerns about not wanting to “sacrifice quality” (implying that BIPOC candidates are inherently lower quality than their white counterparts), say that they aren’t a good fit for the program, express baseless concerns about their background and lack of preparation, etc. (source: [Sharlene Newman, University of Indiana Bloomington: *White Supremacy in Neuroscience*, OHBM Diversity Round Table 2021](https://www.humanbrainmapping.org/files/2021%20Annual%20Meeting/1057_Sy_Diversity.pdf))
* Finally, white supremacy is pervasive in many fields of research as well

## What is the importance of community engagement with racial equity work?

In order to shift the culture to be anti-racist, all members of the community need to be actively engaged and have a shared sense of responsibility. As things are now, institutions frequently funnel diversity efforts into a single “diversity” center, which allows the beneficiaries of white privilege to adopt the attitude that this work is “not their problem” and think that it is being taken care of by others. But in reality, the burden of this work falls largely on volunteers from marginalized backgrounds; because this volunteer work is done on top of what is typically an already demanding academic schedule and doesn’t count towards degree completion or promotion, the reliance on volunteers ends up perpetuating racial inequities.

## You’re a white person talking about racial equity and inclusion, where are the non-white people in your group?

Non-white students, staff and faculty are burdened with the minority tax, where they are asked to be on every panel, committee, and task force. Our group works to unburden our non-white members by not asking that they do everything within our group. That means that sometimes white people within the group represent our group as a whole. It is important to highlight that whenever our group engages in an event, our spokesperson represents our group as a whole and relays the decisions, beliefs and positions that we reached as a collective that actively works to center BIPOC voices.

## Our racial equity data shows that we’re at the national average, isn’t that good/enough?

*\*Bangs head against wall\**

Those national averages reflect a deeply flawed and racist system that has actively excluded people from certain racial and ethnic backgrounds. The fact that our institution is at those national averages shows that we haven’t risen above or actively worked to undo a legacy of racism and white supremacy. When the whole system has failed, being “average” is neither good nor enough. Furthermore, racial equity data rarely captures the inclusivity of the university culture, which is also a critical metric to assess the state of racial equity.