

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)

# University of Delaware Diversity Program Leaves Temple Thinking.

## Sudden Controversy at Delaware lead to the diversity training do's and don'ts.

**By: Cassandra Clair**

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The University of Delaware announced Nov. 2 that it would suspend its freshman diversity-training program for the remainder of the 2007-2008 school year after a three-day controversy with the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

The training seminar, a required program in residence halls and taught by resident assistants, was brought to the attention of FIRE because of the unsettling tension between students after they were instructed to write down all the stereotypes of the ethnicities of other students in the program and announce them in front of their peers. In addition, students claimed that they were forced to adopt the university's views on difficult issues such as sexism and racism, according to a Nov. 2 article in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

In comparison with Delaware, Temple University takes a different approach when dealing with the issues of race.

Instead of a program taught by resident assistants, Temple has classes taught by learned professors and students are required to complete a Studies in Race course before graduating.

"The danger is there are a lot of people who don't give race respect," said Jacob Kim, a racial studies professor at Temple. "They think it's simple... it's very complex ... It's irresponsible for people to leave it into the hands of people who don't know what they're doing and don't really grasp the whole concept."

Asked if diversity training is essential for incoming college students, Assistant Vice President of Multicultural Affairs Rhonda Brown said the preparation is necessary.

"I think we do have conflicts, and I think the conflicts come from people not understanding what diversity is in its fullness," Brown said. "Which is why training is such a beautiful thing because sometimes people who don't understand might not speak up as quickly because they don't want to be identified as being racist or being ignorant enough not to understand the situation. In [a] training area, people get to talk about things from the very basic beginning. It gives people the opportunity to learn without admitting they don't know and develop without figuring out what is a problem and what isn't a problem."

Brown also said she is not receptive to classes with university-approved views that students have to learn.

"Mandatory training makes me a little nervous because it's like mandatory counseling," Brown said. "If you don't recognize that there's an issue, and if you don't recognize that there's space for growth, then I don't know

how far you'll ever move."

Temple has made sure the people teaching the sensitive subject of race are given the freedom to teach however they wish and Kim said the university can benefit from this freedom.

"Really each professor is given a lot of leeway with the syllabus, the teaching approach, the environment of the class, and the personality of the teacher affects the dynamics of the class. The flexibility, at least of when [students] can take it and which department to take it through, might help defusing some potential stuff."

Diversity cannot only be taught, but it is also learned through experiences and meeting other people, Brown said.

"The biggest part of training is exposure," Brown said. "And the beauty of Temple is that you get this exposure on a daily basis."

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