



Written by [Jeffrey Mahn](#) on May 19, 2023

University of Michigan Engineering School Goes Woke

An article in the Spring 2023 edition of the *Michigan Engineer*, titled “How to Teach Engineering for Equity,” states that “in 2020, Michigan Engineering made a promise to address systemic racism in engineering.”

The article explains that the University of Michigan College of Engineering has set up a new Teaching Engineering Equity ([TEE](#)) Center, funded with \$1.2 million from the National Science Foundation (NSF). It goes on to say that a team at the engineering school’s [Center for Socially Engaged Design](#) has been generating case studies documenting times when “social dynamics have affected engineering outcomes,” with a professor of higher education leading the development of a framework for professors and lecturers to use in modifying their courses.



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It further states that a director of the [Center for Learning and Teaching-Engineering](#) will lead “teaching circles” to ensure that “students with marginalized identities feel included but not singled out – and students with majority identities don’t shut down.”

The article also indicates that the TEE Center will generate a library of diversity, equity, and inclusion ([DEI](#)) learning activities within specific engineering contexts and disciplines, and will design an evidence-based framework for creating an equity-in-engineering-centered curriculum.

Based on this article, I decided to explore the Michigan Engineering website to see if I could find more details, and further details there were. One [page](#) of the website stated that the TEE Center is funded through the NSF’s [Broadening Participation in Engineering Program](#), which aims to support the development of a “diverse and prepared engineering workforce and build more inclusive and equitable academic experiences.” It goes on to state that the center has a unique focus on embedding DEI content directly into the curriculum, equipping students and instructors with “strategies for equitable engineering practice and improving the engineering climate.” The following quote encapsulates the center’s objective:

We are building a framework to ensure every member of the engineering community is educated about issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, beginning with a focus on race, ethnicity and unconscious bias.

A major initiative that will be taking the engineering school beyond the university’s five-year strategic plan and “into the future of a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment that permeates our community” is a sustained, pervasive education around issues of race, ethnicity, unconscious bias, and



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inclusion for everyone in engineering — students, faculty, and staff — within one year.

The website contains the following statements from co-principal investigators for the TEE Center:

We're formalizing what it means to teach new engineers to practice in an equity-centered way, so that they understand the gaps that exist in society and can create engineering solutions that deliberately close those gaps rather than unintentionally expand them.

We know that to make progress on equity in engineering, students must understand how engineering solutions can harm members of society. At the same time, engineers need to understand how the identities of those producing solutions—and how engineers interact with one another—affect engineering outcomes.

The website goes on to say that researchers and staff at Michigan Engineering's Center for Socially Engaged Design have been documenting real-world case studies for three years, focusing on "how engineering decisions affect inclusion and equity." One case study, used as an example of the absence of inclusion and equity in engineering decision-making, is the first artificial heart, which was designed by a male-dominated team and found to be too large for most women.

Another cited case study is of Elijah McCoy, a black American engineer and prolific inventor who, despite developing important lubrication systems for steam engines, couldn't start his own company until late in life because of the barriers posed by the Jim Crow era in the United States. This historically oriented case study, the [website](#) says, "will help students explore what has changed in engineering, what hasn't, and the throughlines from past to present."

The site indicates that lessons from the case studies will be used to develop and evaluate a framework that can "guide the integration of engineering-relevant content on diversity, equity and justice—as well as inclusive teaching practices—into engineering courses."

If the Michigan College of Engineering really has its finger on the pulse of the engineering profession, I can only conclude that I must have slept through my career because I had no clue the profession was so rife with racism. But for the woke crowd, this is just obvious proof that I must be a racist.

I can honestly say that I never witnessed systemic racism during my engineering career. And I was not aware of any systemic racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination within the engineering profession. That doesn't mean I was never aware of such allegations during my career, but allegations based on discontent, rather than actual discrimination, are hardly evidence of a systemic problem. I knew some engineers who alleged discrimination in one form or another as the reason why they were denied positions that would have rendered them additional proof of the Peter Principle (the concept that people are promoted until they reach a level at which they are no longer competent). I also observed some who became successful practitioners of this principle.

Unfortunately, the science and engineering professions have become dominated by leftist ideology in the 21st century, and these professions are succumbing to an Orwellian world where facts are fiction and perception is reality.



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