



MICHIGAN STATE

U N I V E R S I T Y

Task Force on Racial Equity

CAMPUS CLIMATE

Fall 2020



Recommendations from the campus climate working group of the Task Force on Racial Equity

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Though the charge of the Task Force is to provide immediate recommendations on improving the racial climate on campus, the committee would like to recognize and state that all of our root problems cannot be simply reconciled with a few quick actions but rather require long-term, strategic plans to effectively and permanently dismantle the systemic structures of oppression and racism. We have tried to highlight those that can be immediate remedies and those that are first steps in a series of long-term actions that can help to improve our overall campus climate. Those recommendations that are more long term should be referred to both the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Steering Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee for further review.

Information and communication area

Robust and all-encompassing communication mechanism

There is a lack of an internal communication structure that notifies the campus community of racial incidents on campus, i.e., the hanging dolls at the Wharton Center. Many campus DEI leaders and frontline educators find out about the incidents through outside media and/or social media. Failure to keep DEI-facing offices/units informed results in missed opportunities, misunderstandings and causes a delay in response and actions to the affected and targeted communities. It does not always have to be negative information. There was a great response and recognition of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples by the president this fall. It should have been widely publicized, but only certain pockets of our campus were made aware. It was the first time in living memory MSU publicly addressed and acknowledged the day.

- Communication must be transparent and should not only rely on informing the deans and chairs. Information does not trickle down well, and the process can take a long time or can be disrupted. This has caused delays in response time.
 - Immediate recommendation: University wide communication system should be deployed so all levels at the university are made aware of all significant DEI issues, news, updates and concerns. There should be careful attention that all units, especially those that are student facing, should have special consideration as they have direct contact with students and can help remediate potential problems.
 - Immediate recommendation: DEI-identified website that is a clearinghouse of DEI resources should be available. Currently, DEI information is scattered across too many websites, of which some are not updated regularly. MSU does not have an all-encompassing website. It needs to be both externally and internally



facing so information is easily found and accessible. The website should also link subsequent sites within the university. This site should be constantly updated, maintained and well resourced.

- Mandatory reporting of all racial incidents on campus. Even if incidents do not violate the Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP), the university must take steps to capture all incidents to get an accurate picture of the racial climate. If there is a question as to what should be reported, MSU requires mandatory DEI training and implicit bias training. If MSU is willing to train its employees and students on the importance of DEI and awareness of implicit bias, we should be collecting data with regard to when, how and who are in violation. The data should be routinely collected and provided to the university in quarterly reports. Though the following recommendations are not immediate, MSU can take immediate steps at minimum to begin the process of reporting and collecting of incidents.
 - Long-term recommendation: Unlike the Clery Report, which is bulky and difficult to read, the university should adopt giving a detailed DEI state of the university address quarterly. The report should capture all incidents, types, frequencies and responses, actions taken and outcomes.
 - Mid-term recommendation: Designate a unit or the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE), which would be responsible for gathering all racial incidents and reports for data collection, regardless of the outcome. The collected data should help form quarterly DEI reports. The office will be responsible for outlining the process of reporting, communication and training to the campus community.
- The Black Student Alliance (BSA) and the Council of Racial and Ethnic Students (CORES) and Council of Progressive Students (COPS) had presented the university with a list of 10 demands.
 - Recommendation: The university must take immediate steps to communicate with the students about updates to their list of demands. Regardless of the university's ability of meeting their demands, there needs to be a response and regular updates on intentions and/or responses. Regular communication and updates will help build trust among the students, especially those in CORES: Asian Pacific American Student Organization (APASO), Black Student Alliance (BSA), Culturas de las Razas Unidas (CRU) and North American Indigenous Student Organization (NAISO).
 1. We demand the revitalization of the Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions office, its programming and the intercultural aide program by fall 2020.
 2. We demand a mandatory general education course for all students on race, ethnicity, racism and gender to be implemented into curriculum by Fall 2020.
 3. We demand cultural, racial and religious sensitivity training for all university faculty, staff, contractors and police officers as outlined by a student selected group by fall 2020.
 4. We demand the Black and minority faculty and staff demographics in each department reflect the current national demographics by December 2021.



5. We demand that Michigan State University become registered as a sanctuary school.
 6. We demand the addition of reflection rooms in all campus neighborhoods.
 7. We demand that a free-standing multicultural building be placed on campus.
 8. We demand that Michigan State University increase the number of gender-inclusive housing options and restrooms on campus by 75% by the start of the fall 2020 semester.
 9. We demand that the flat-rate tuition price be dropped to the price of 12 credit hours by the start of the winter 2020 semester.
 10. We demand that the Division of Student Affairs & Services create a designated fund for the Council of Progressive Students (COPS).
- As we focus on student engagement, voices and concerns, we often limit our emphasis to only undergraduate concerns and issues. As a premier research and graduate institution, we must pay special attention to the DEI concerns of our graduate students. Too often, graduate students of color and post-docs are often left out of student discussions with regards to DEI.
 - Immediate recommendation: Along with the Council of Graduates Students (COGS), there should be steps taken to include the racial and ethnic graduate students' organizations. Below is a list, though not all-encompassing:
 - Asian Pacific American Graduate Alliance (APAGA)
 - Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA)
 - Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS)
 - National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCCHE)
 - Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS)
 - Post-docs from various colleges, especially in those units where there are a limited number of post-doctorates of color.

Policies and Procedures Area

- [Racial impact studies](#) and reports must be considered on all university procedures, changes, decisions, hiring, funding and policies, i.e., whether flat-rate tuition would negatively impact African American, Latinx, Native Indigenous and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American students.
 - Long-term recommendation: With guidance from the DEI Steering Committee and Strategic Planning Committee, we must utilize racial impact studies to make better-informed decisions and potential outcomes to our racial/ethnic populations and overall campus climate.
 - Long-term recommendation: Revisiting all existing policies and procedures so we are continually examining ongoing inequities, institutional discrimination, systematic and historic oppressions. This should be conducted on a regular and routine basis, i.e., renaming of the Nisbet Building.



- National and/or institutional crises such as COVID-19 have direct and indirect impacts on racial climate. Preliminary data indicates that our furloughs and cuts have disproportionately affected our African American and Latinx populations.
 - Immediate recommendations: Human Resources should gather data and conduct reports of all furloughed employees and examine the results. Creation of a standard policy to recognize disparate impact on various communities, if any, will aid MSU in making better-informed HR decisions. The results should be available to the campus community.

- Currently, we have various campus climate surveys with differing questions and responses that are housed all over campus. This needs to be centralized and standardized so we can obtain a clearer picture of campus climate. Many times, the questions that are asked only provide a glimpse and capture a limited view of our racial/ethnic campus climate. We must include all voices of color in climate reports and move away from a binary view of race. We need to move beyond the conversations that are only black-and-white.
 - Here is just a listing of a few of the past climate surveys we have conducted in the past:
 - Faculty/staff
 - Students
 - Work life
 - Individual colleges
 - Others
 - CoREM DEI Summit Report
 - Campus Climate Assessment Survey
 - Nat Sci survey
 - Staff (and faculty?) survey
 - LBGTRC climate survey
 - Know More survey (administered by the Prevention, Outreach and Education Department)
 - Advising survey
 - JMC campus climate survey
 - Mid- to long-term recommendation: MSU must conduct regular, annual and all-encompassing campus climate surveys of the entire university. The results should also be central and easily located. As this can be a long process, this recommendation could be referred to the DEI Steering Committee for further investigation.
 - Immediate recommendation: Broaden our racial/ethnic diversity to include multiracial identities, intersectionalities and avoid affinity bias.

- MSU has hired its first vice president and chief diversity officer (VPCDO), and it is a first step among many more to come. However, DEI is not the sole responsibility of one director or office, but rather the responsibility of the entire campus community. To



actualize DEI to its fullest potential, MSU should move from transitioning to transforming MSU to a true multicultural institution.

- Long-term recommendation: Identify and establish DEI offices in each college. While some colleges have already established offices and personnel, uneven commitment can have unintended consequences of allowing those colleges to not put a strong value on DEI. Furthermore, we must include university wide systems that go beyond degree-granting colleges, but to include all divisions and units. Expansion to include all colleges and college level units to have designated personnel, i.e., Residence Education and Housing Services, Division of Student Affairs & Services, Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and etc.
- The offices and directors need to be full-time, fully funded and staffed to address their college's DEI initiatives.
- Although this is a long-term recommendation, there needs to be an immediate recognition that all colleges must have an office and identified personnel. This will take time and planning. It must be abundantly clear that these offices, along with the vice president and chief diversity officer office, need to be fully funded and fully staffed in every college. There also needs to be coordination and collaboration among all the colleges and with the new VPCDO office. The planning should be at minimum initiated so that all colleges have an office by 2022.

Education, training and workshops

- MSU has begun to offer mandatory DEI training beginning fall of 2020. We recognize this is a start, but we need to go beyond just online modules and training. We need to expand to include in-person workshops and ongoing learning that builds upon itself. Although any training or workshops take time, we need to make a commitment to present and future trainings for all classifications: staff, faculty and students.
 - Immediate and long-term recommendation: In coordination and collaboration with Prevention Outreach and Education (POE), Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives (I3), the new VPCDO office(s), DEI Steering Committee and Strategic Planning Committee, we must establish informal and formal educational, training and workshop opportunities for all employees.
 - Immediate recommendation: Develop mini-courses or make all current racial and ethnic courses available and accessible to all employees and students. We must learn, relearn and unlearn our racial and ethnic histories and culture that have shaped our United States history, though there should be an emphasis on racial and ethnic identities: African American, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American, Latinx, Native Indigenous and other identity courses, i.e., LGBTQAI+, women's, etc., should also be included. Refer to DEI Steering Committee's formal and informal curriculum working groups.
- Immediate recommendation: Racial trauma for African American, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American, Latinx, Native Indigenous students, faculty and staff (being mindful to



include other minoritized identities, but the urgent need is to address racial trauma) is a growing concern, particularly in this racially violent and polarized society.

- Long-term recommendation: MSU once had a thriving Multi-Ethnic Counseling Center Alliance (MECCA), but it was cut and dismantled in the late 1990s. Although Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) has made inroads in hiring more counselors and therapists of color, it is not enough for the growing demand. We need a center that has a strong emphasis on racial healing and long-term counseling.
- Immediate recommendation: Creation of a Restorative Justice Unit on campus, modeling after the Restorative Justice Faculty Learning Circle. It can be housed in OIE or VPCDO for all racial incidents that do not rise to the level of violating the ADP.
 - Creation of healing circles, which address harm when it happens based on a restorative justice model, brings about healing — healing circles that focus on the impact rather than just the intent.
- With growing societal pressures, social justice movements and increased polarization, protests are among our everyday culture. We must ensure students have a right to express their First Amendment rights without fear of police brutality, violence, intimidation or retribution.
- Immediate recommendation: Provide clear, transparent and accessible guidelines from the MSU Police Department with regard to student protests. The plan should keep protestors safe while allowing freedom of expression.
- Immediate recommendation: Designating MSU as a sanctuary school
 - Designated personnel and office to address issues for DACA/undocumented students. Unfortunately, there is no consensus on what defines sanctuary school. As MSU has created a website, it is lacking and needs more information, especially for our vulnerable undocu/DACAmented students.
- Immediate recommendation: Reinforce the focus on equity vs. equality and the acknowledgement of current and past inequities.
- This was specifically brought up by the students in the group: There has been institutional betrayal on part of the administration, especially within the Division of Student Affairs & Services, to its African American, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American, Latinx and Native Indigenous communities.
 - Immediate recommendation: There must be immediate steps, assessment and actions to rebuild trust and relationships between Division of Student Affairs & Services and CORES/COPS.