



**MICHIGAN STATE**  

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**U N I V E R S I T Y**

Task Force on Racial Equity

POLICING

Fall 2020



Recommendations from the policing working group of the Task Force on Racial Equity

**Chairperson:** Jennifer Cobbina

**Working Group:** Prabu David, Amanuel Engeda, Juan Flores-Soto, Jasmine Jordan, Oprah Jrenal, Michael Kaplowitz, Florene McGlothian-Taylor, Brenda Nelson, Sharron Reed-Davis

As everyone knows, at MSU we have a diverse group of faculty, staff and students, and it is important that the MSU Police Department is responsive to diversity. Widespread civil unrest took place across the country, and MSU is not immune. As a committee, we believe that amid changing times and pressures in society, we have a unique opportunity to put proactive measures in place to handle unrest and address the underlying problems. Finally, we all know that we have had an incredibly controversial and divisive presidential election, and MSU must be responsive. So we provide short-term, intermediate and long-term goals to better address some of these issues.

### **SHORT-TERM (Fall 2020)**

#### **Anti-Bias Inclusion Unit Team**

- Expand the Anti-Bias Inclusion Unit to a team
  - Hire an administrative assistant.
  - Hire a communication specialist just for the Anti-Bias Inclusion Unit.
  - Hire a team of social workers and counselors.
  - Have more intentional collaboration between units across campus doing similar anti-bias work (i.e., Office of Institutional Equity, Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, Prevention Outreach and Education Department, chief diversity officer, chief of police).
  - Develop an anti-bias training for officers to receive on an ongoing basis.

#### **Reprioritize budget**

- Announce a hiring freeze of police officers.

#### **Review committee**

- Appoint a review committee to review the police budget to ascertain 1) where funds are spent, 2) how the MSUPD compares to other police departments across academic institutions, 3) how much funding to cut, and 4) where to cut funds (i.e., military weapons).
- Appoint a review committee to analyze how many cases officers are deployed when responding to calls. Investigate what kind of responders should be deployed (i.e., mental health, social workers) instead of police officers.

**Proactive services**

- The MSUPD should be changed to MSU peace officer or public safety officer. This is a way to reinforce to officers and the public that the MSUPD is there to protect and serve the MSU community. This department should promote and emphasize the mission of public safety and support, as well as offer resources to people to get the help they need.
- Have diverse language skills that police bring into the campus community.
- Do not have police officers conduct wellness checks on campus. This can be done by mental health and social workers. If officers, however, do conduct wellness checks, they should not carry weapons.
- Take proactive approaches to meet students' needs (i.e., Alcoholic Anonymous, Olin Health Center education, MSU Student Food Bank, reduced housing rates).
- Hire substantially more mental health workers that work in day and evenings shifts — not just 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Accountability**

- Establish a representative Police Oversight Committee comprised of faculty, staff, students and community members who have power to make change (as opposed to simply being an advisory committee). This committee should be racially/ethnically diverse and, certainly, well-versed in issues pertaining to policing and race.
  - The chair of the Police Oversight Committee should be given a full-time commitment and receive a course release to ensure adequate time is spent leading this committee.
  - The Police Oversight Committee should oversee police training and conduct.
  - The Police Oversight Committee should conduct an after-action review of serious incidents that take place on campus to ensure ongoing public safety and improved services on campus.
  - The Police Oversight Committee should report to the President.
- For the sake of increased accountability and transparency, police should not investigate officer misconduct that takes place within their own department.
- Human Resources should conduct exit interviews among those who leave the police department.
  - Review the specific questions that are asked in the exit interview by Human Resources.
  - Ensure exit interviews include questions about the culture and leadership of the police department.
  - Investigate reasons that officers leave the police department.

**Standard operating procedures**

- The police department should not be militarized. Armored vehicles and military equipment should not be used.
- Since the job of an officer is stressful and can, at times, be traumatic, we recommend mandatory psychological counseling at least two times a year, perhaps every quarter, and after a violent/tragic encounter that they have witnessed or experienced.



### Peaceful protests

- Police should not be in attendance of peaceful protests.
- If police are in attendance, have clear protocols for handling peaceful protests. For example:
  - Have a friendly demeanor.
  - Ask how to help.
  - Use the least force possible.
  - Give clear warnings before taking action.
  - Do not use tear gas.
  - Do not use guns.
  - If there are individuals who are engaging in violent behavior, focus on those individuals as opposed to everyone who is protesting.
  - Ticket individuals who are engaging in destructive behavior instead of arresting them.
- Eliminate the use of tear gas within the police department.
  - Communicate in a respectful manner (i.e., ask if people need help and are OK, instead of responding with anger and violence).

### Professional development

- As a centerpiece of all training, curricula should devote substantial hours to topics such as de-escalation, use of excessive force, community building, problem solving, ethics and cultural diversity — training should not just be relegated to operations and weapons training.
- Police should receive ongoing training in de-escalation that is both verbal and non-verbal for those who are hearing impaired (i.e., sign language).
- Police officers should receive ongoing training in interacting with people who are experiencing a mental health crisis or are neurodivergent (i.e., autistic).

## INTERMEDIATE (Spring 2021)

### Reprioritize budget

- Reduce the number of police officers. As people retire, replace with civilians not carrying a weapon (i.e., social workers).

### Accountability

- During orientation, students should be trained to file a complaint against officers who engage in misconduct.
- Have outside people involved in the selection process of police officers.
- If additional officers are hired, effort should be made to hire individuals from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds and diverse language skills by going to neighborhoods of color to recruit them to apply. Currently, there are a total of 76 police officers within the MSUPD. They include:
  - 24 Women
    - 20 White



- Black
  - bi-racial
- 52 Men
  - 43 White
  - 4 Black
  - 3 Hispanic
  - 2 Asian
- Under EO 11246/affirmative action requirements, the MSUPD should build a diverse pool of candidates built on race/ethnicity. To create a racially/ethnically diverse pipeline, it is necessary to:
  - Design a program to ensure high school students come to MSU and consider policing as a career.
  - Recruit college students finishing up their degree. Recruiters should go to historically Black colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions and tribal colleges.
- To avoid re-traumatizing victims of police abuse, harassment and violence, the MSUPD should set up a system for mental health clinicians, social workers and the anti-bias unit to communicate with them following an incident.

### **Professional development**

- Have a department-wide professional development that includes the “Police-Community Reconciliation Framework,” which entails frank engagements between racial/ethnic minorities and law enforcement to address historical tensions, grievances and misconceptions that contribute to mutual mistrust and misunderstanding and prevent police and communities from working together. It is necessary to consider the voices of people who have been directly impacted by the police.

## **LONG-TERM ITEMS DISCUSSED**

### **Response to calls**

- In an ideal world, people with the appropriate training and skill sets respond to calls (e.g., social workers, mental healthcare clinicians, etc.).
- In an ideal world, when police respond to calls, they should not be carrying their service weapons unless there is a clear threat (e.g., active shooter).

### **Abolish police**

- The police working group discussed abolishing the police. There were a small number of the members who had very strong feelings about the possibility of abolishing the police; however, that is not the majority. We are like the nation that is grappling with this big issue — whether to have the police or not. The police working group could not come to a consensus as to whether the police department should be abolished.

We hope this report will serve as guide for the search committee and the firm in hiring a responsive MSUPD chief who is committed to protecting and serving every constituent on campus.