

**Diversity and Inclusion**  
at Canisius College



Where We Have Been  
**Where We Intend to Go**



# Racial Equity Strategic Plan 2019-2024

## I. Community

Being intentional with our internal and external interactions, communications, and relationships through empowered participation and a sense of belonging.

1. Create, increase and deepen opportunities to build cross-racial relationships at Canisius College and in the greater Buffalo community.

## II. Curriculum & Academic Initiatives

Deconstructing Whiteness in the classroom, and ensuring our curriculum addresses race and racism.

1. Ensure that race and ethnicity are being taken up concretely across the college curriculum.
2. Develop the intellectual and academic culture of the institution with respect to different ways of knowing (e.g., personal narrative and experience, visual and performative arts, spiritual and Indigenous knowledge).

## III. Educational Programs

Cultivating opportunities for members of the college community to work in partnership on efforts that address race by developing programs that encourage self-reflection, conversation, and action.

1. Develop intersectional education programs and opportunities by promoting collaboration among student organizations and college departments.

## IV. Intersectionality

Utilizing an intersectional framework to better understand the compounding effects of systems of oppression on individuals and groups.

1. Incorporate knowledge, experiences, and perspectives that address issues of race and its intersections with age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

## V. Recruitment & Retention

Creating structures and practices that provide access, development, and recognition of faculty, staff, and students.

1. Build talented teams by proactively recruiting and retaining faculty, staff, and students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.
2. Implement inclusive and equitable hiring practices.

## VI. Training & Skill Building

Increasing institutional capacity to address racial equity by developing the awareness, knowledge, and skills of all members of the college.

1. Develop a comprehensive campus-wide training initiatives that addresses racial equity and anti-racism.



*Unveiled in 2020, the statement reflects the work of a subcommittee led by the associate dean and made up of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, student affairs and facilities management staff, as well as neighbors from the Hamlin Park Taxpayer Association.*

## Statement on Diversity and Inclusion at Canisius

Consistent with our Catholic Jesuit mission and identity, we stand in solidarity with and advocate for everyone of all abilities, identities, life experiences, and perspectives. As a campus located in a diverse Buffalo community, we are committed to:

- Creating a culture of acceptance, awareness, learning, respect, and understanding inside and outside of the classroom
- Pursuing academic excellence through a curriculum of diverse ideas and vibrant interpersonal classroom experiences that challenge individuals to grow
- Promoting a safe and welcoming experience that encourages questioning and discussion
- Advancing equity by removing institutional barriers to success for all members of the community
- Developing lifelong learners who contribute to an increasingly diverse and global society

## The 2014 and 2018 Campus Climate Surveys

In the spring of 2014, a campus climate committee co-chaired by Matthew Hertz, PhD, Director of Research and Institutional Effectiveness, and Craig Rogers, PhD, Associate Professor of Economics and Finance, was formed to explore issues impacting students of color at Canisius College. Made up of students, staff, faculty, and administrators, the committee surveyed ALANA (African American, Latino/a/x American, Asian, and Native American) students. They reported experiencing social and academic isolation linked to microaggressions, and fewer leadership opportunities compared to their white peers. These results inspired a number of recommendations:

- Continue to work with offices and departments that serve



ALANA students and integrate them fully into the fabric of the college;

- Develop programs that increase faculty advisors' awareness of, and sensitivity to, issues impacting ALANA students and their academic performance;
- Create parallel ad hoc student committees to support cultural heritage programming (e.g. Native American Student Circle) in support of ALANA student clubs;
- Bring in popular outside speaker(s) to facilitate campus-wide town-hall discussions on race;
- Train all faculty (not just advisors) on ALANA student issues and ways to support this group;
- Develop creative approaches to help all students

understand issues in culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse populations;

- Identify outside resources to help fund programs focused on these issues; and
- Create tools for ALANA student clubs (and others) to improve communication and collaboration among groups, encourage co-sponsorship of events, and promote practices that improve event turnout.

Despite efforts to implement these new ideas, in November 2015, Joy McBride, President of the Afro American Society, voiced frustration with the slow progress being made. John J. Hurley, President of Canisius College, followed up with Ms. McBride, and in 2016, he met with members of the Afro American Society. More than 40 students called for more intentional efforts to address race and racism within the institution. President Hurley convened a campus-wide task force, which created the Student Racial Diversity Team. In the spring of 2018, the team administered a second campus climate survey, and this time faculty and staff of color were included. With 800 respondents, much of the survey feedback echoed the 2014 results.

## Working Toward Inclusive Excellence

In the spring of 2019, the results of the campus climate survey were presented to faculty and staff, who were invited to give their feedback. The Diversity & Inclusion Committee, a new group formed by Dr. Margaret McCarthy, Vice President for Academic Affairs at the time, analyzed the responses and identified six areas of focus: Community, Curriculum/Academic Initiatives, Educational Programs, Intersectional Work, Recruitment & Retention, and Training & Skill Building.

In 2019 Fatima Rodriguez Johnson joined Canisius as the college's first-ever Associate Dean for Diversity &

Inclusion. She guided the committee to develop a strategic plan around the six areas and using the framework of Inclusive Excellence from the Association of American Colleges & Universities (Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence, 2015). To cultivate an environment where all can thrive, institutions must understand the unique needs of each student and provide access to high-quality learning opportunities that:

- Are focused on student intellectual and social development by offering the best possible course of study for the context in which the education is offered.
- Purposefully develop and utilize organizational resources to enhance student learning by establishing an environment that challenges each student to achieve academically at high levels and each member of the campus to contribute to learning and knowledge development.
- Give attention to the cultural differences learners bring to the educational experience and that enhance the enterprise.
- Are provided within a welcoming community that engages all of its diversity in the service of student and organizational learning.



Our efforts to improve the campus climate for all members of Canisius College are consistent with the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019-2029. Arturo Sosa, SJI, Superior General (February, 2019), states that we must go out to the human peripheries and to the margins of society, and follow a path that promotes social justice and challenges the economic, political, and social structures that perpetuate injustice. This is also the work that we are called to do as we strive to become a more diverse and inclusive institution.

