The Way Forward

Affirmation + Allyship + Action

This update offers a snapshot of the ways we continue to co-create space to learn and engage across difference, celebrate belonging, and evolve our pursuit of inclusive academic excellence. This report merely scratches the surface of the impactful work happening across campus by our faculty, staff, students and leadership. Informed by our Jesuit Catholic character, we aim to pursue diversity, equity and inclusion with humility, intention and deeper understanding of the context of our times.

During these months of physical separation and isolation, many of us have faced unspeakable grief, uncertainty about the future and exhaustion from pivoting our personal lives and work to meet the moment. Yet, our Jesuit values resonate strongly in the voices of some of our colleagues and our students, current and recent alumni, who generously share their experiences of these unprecedented times including the social movement for Black lives. If you have felt the void of relationships and in-person engagement with our students and one another, this review offers inspiration for hope and reflection.

Natasha Martin, JD, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion and Associate Professor of Law, created and delivered the university’s latest action plan during the President’s Welcome, laying the framework for the university to continue advancing inclusive excellence and align anti-racism with its strategic direction and purpose.

Known officially as LIFT SU: Inclusive Excellence Action Plan for Racial Equity and Anti-racism 2020-2021, the plan incorporates the principles of LIFT: Listen and learn / Impact through intentional action / Fail forward / Transform together. With these principles in mind, Seattle U is committed to live and lead inclusively.

About the plan, Martin states, “As a Jesuit Catholic university, we commit to racial justice not only in our stated values and mission, but also commit to anti-racist education as institutional practice. We proclaim that Black Lives Matter and seek to more closely align anti-racism with strategic direction and purpose.”

LIFT SU has been endorsed by senior leadership in its Commitment to Live and Lead for Racial Equity and Anti-racism.
Reflections from Vice President for DIVERSITY and INCLUSION

When I offered the invitation for us all to Love. Hard. Now! at last fall’s Mass of the Holy Spirit, I could not have imagined our current reality—a global health pandemic, a looming economic crisis, and a massive social movement for racial justice. I was honored to share a message of hope at the beginning of last academic year. This reflection serves as a follow-up invitation to hold onto hope during these unimaginable times and continue the journey toward a more inclusive and equitable university and world.

Ahmaud Arbery (February 23); Breonna Taylor (March 12); George Floyd (May 25); Rayshard Brooks (June 12) . . . their violent deaths continue to haunt and motivate me. Our inability to honor the humanity of one another reflects our divided political reality and more significantly, in our broken systems that made their deaths possible. I continue to process these tragedies with heartbreak, determination and yes, hope. My hope lies in our students and their potential to make the world more just and humane by expanding their knowledge, developing empathy, and growing the courage to disrupt systems that reproduce inequity and injustice. I believe our students will be some of the most creative problem solvers of the future precisely because of what they now endure and my conviction that our holistic Jesuit education is made for this moment.

To be sure, our landscape is different, yet our purpose remains clear and our resolve strong to make racial equity and anti-racist education more than a stated value of our Jesuit Catholic character, but transformative and sustainable institutional practice for the good of all students. Holding to the principles of LIFT SU, we must affirm, ally and act!

I leave you with a question I’ve pondered over the last several months: So we are left with a choice. Will this moment only feel different? Or will it actually be different? (Nikole Hannah-Jones, “What Is Owed,” New York Times, June 30, 2020). Hannah-Jones’ poignant question captures for me both the promise and the peril of this watershed moment we are living and challenges us all to self-examine, reflect on hard truths and take strategic systematic action to address those aspects of our institution that impact belonging, achievement and thriving for all who live, learn and work at SU.

Let us hold ourselves and one another accountable. Dwell in hope and honesty. This is what the moment demands, our students deserve and the world needs. Thank you for your efforts and ongoing partnership. Indeed, these times call for furious love in action.

In solidarity,
Natasha Martin, JD
Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion
“While so much has gone unbearably wrong, shifts in consciousness have resulted in collective action that proves that a better world is possible, and we are not going to stop until we achieve it.”
Mariana Renteria Hernandez, ’20
BA Psychology & Criminal Science, emphasis in Forensic Science

“My four years at SU included some of the best and most challenging times of my life, affording me multiple opportunities for personal and professional growth. I enjoyed discussing topics of race, ableism, diversity, inclusion, etc., both in and out of class with my peers.”
Nicole KanoeiLani Harrison, ’20
BA Political Science & Communications and Media, emphasis in Strategic Communication / Student Success Coach at AmeriCorps

“While current events have shown us the centuries-old flaws of our criminal justice system, I am hopeful that we can achieve the reform that is sorely needed. I am hopeful because I am joined by professionals of all races, creeds, colors, identities and walks of life, in solidarity and partnership.”
Efrain Hudnell, ’20
JD, School of Law / Deputy Prosecutor, King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office

“It’s hard to check in with others especially when you have your own challenges going on, but that’s something that has kept me going during this tough time—being present with one another (virtually or distanced) in the midst of uncertainty.”
Jass Juanich, ’20
BS Public Affairs & Political Science / ’19-20 SGSU President / 2020 Distinguished Graduating Student / MPH Student

“Through this ‘great pause,’ I have found the need to self-reflect on those relationships that I may have taken for granted. Though this year has its challenges, it is with gratitude that I have my Jesuit education and a strong support system through my family and friends. Lead with love.”
Azrael Howell, ’20
BA Psychology / ’18-19 SGSU President / Alfie Scholar

“I process these times through a historical lens. Though these times are in many ways unprecedented, my historical lens gives me hope. The human struggle has always involved suffering and fear, but also many moments of overcoming.”
Serena Oduro, ’20
BA History, Minor in Business Administration, Chinese, Global African Studies and Philosophy / Sullivan Scholar / Rhodes Scholarship and Marshall Scholarship Finalist / Technology Equity Fellow at Greenlining Institute

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“Racial injustices are nothing new in America, but to me it feels like a lot of people are starting to open their eyes to the problem. Change takes time and it is easy to feel tired and defeated. Instead, I remind myself to focus on my goals and make my own impact no matter how small.”
Jackson Hollie, ’22
BA Business Administration

“COVID-19 has challenged us in so many ways, making ourselves and our society more transparent than ever before. With this, we have an opportunity. We have an opportunity to see each other, to see ourselves and decide, what kind of society do you want to live in?”
Kauser Gwaderi, ’20
MEd, Student Development Administration / 2020 Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen Award recipient

REAL TALK FROM OUR REDHAWKS

“The Black Student Union (BSU) is my source of hope at Seattle University. In the wake of Black Lives Matter protests and the recent murders of Black people, we found it vital to meet, heal and collaborate to make a change on our campus. In our recent Black community meetings, members had the freedom to express their struggles of being Black at a predominantly white institution and express their grief over the violence caused by systemic racism.”
Adalia Watson, ’21 (above, far right)
BA Environmental Studies specialization in Education and Communications, Minor Writing Studies / Naef Scholar / BSU President ’20-21

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View the BSU student video in the wake of George Floyd’s death here.
A community gathering reflected on the life and legacy of acclaimed literary scholar Toni Morrison, the first African American Nobel Laureate. The event included readings from some of Morrison's notable works and reflections from faculty, staff and students regarding her influence on their claim to voice, space and knowledge as educators, activists and citizens.

ODI partnered with the University Core common text program to host Ijeoma Oluo, Seattle-based author of So You Want to Talk about Race, who engaged the campus for a full day including classroom visits and sessions with students, a leadership session with the President and Cabinet and an evening community address.

The 2020-2021 common text program offers a range of readings, podcasts and video material focused on race, racism and citizenship in the U.S. today and the disparate impacts of COVID-19.

As a supplement to the university’s Common Text Program, ODI curates and publishes a summer reading list. Various areas across campus often select a text to engage over the summer or during the year. The summer 2020 reading list reflected the current context including the social movement for Black lives and racial equity more broadly.
"As a professor at Seattle University, my teaching, research, curatorial work and community engagement all seek to confront racism, champion Black humanity and build a more just world. I teach through an anti-racist lens through the texts we read, the guest speakers we engage and the projects I lead students to build."

Jasmine Mahmoud, PhD
Assistant Professor, Performing Arts & Arts Leadership
Washington State Arts Commissioner

"We are in the midst of monumental change, and many things will not end after the election, rather we will be called to work harder and longer for justice, peace and inclusion of all. We continue to draw on the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual tradition as we create renewed conversations and responses."

Jeanette Rodriguez, PhD
Professor, Theology and Religious Studies
Interim Director, Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture

"I am inspired by what Black businesswomen achieved and their work has motivated me to rethink how I engage. At times, I feel inadequate and immobilized because it seems there is only one way to truly fight oppression, but these women point to other methods. I’m trying to make my actions live up to their example."

Holly Slay Farraro, PhD
Associate Professor, Management / Associate Director, Center for Faculty Development, 2018-2020 Wismer
Professor of Gender and Diversity Studies

"What must be different this time is we must work within existing power structures while not failing to create alternate power structures rooted in liberation ethics simultaneously."

Rt. Rev. Edward Donalson III, DMin
Assistant Clinical Professor, Director of the Doctor of Ministry

"Our students demand that we do this work now. The time for talking is over. We need bold, courageous action. We can refuse to act, but when we do, we must admit that we are colluding with imperialist white supremacy."

Joelle Pretty, EdD
Assistant Provost, Student Academic Engagement

"Racial battle fatigue is real. So real, it can feel impossible to write... Toni Morrison transformed fiction by centering our humanity. By refusing to include the ‘white gaze’ in her work, her radical literacy left an indomitable legacy."

Angelique Davis, JD
Associate Professor, Political Science

"This time the social unrest is familiar, in obvious ways because it is the result of a series of documented (and undocumented) abuses by the police against Brown and Black people... For many of us, there has been a new way of ‘seeing’ as felt in our bodies and souls that cannot now be unseen."

Katherine Raichle, PhD
Associate Director for Learning and Teaching, Center for Faculty Development / Associate Professor, Psychology

"It is inspiring to see and hear the young generations continue the struggle and embrace the John Lewis tradition of ‘good trouble.’ We are no longer hoping for change. We are demanding it."

Carter Johnson
Videographer, Marketing Communications

How do the current uprisings and the political climate around racial injustice remind you of the past, impact your work and inform your thoughts about the future?

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Educating for Justice in Complex Times is an ongoing monthly dialogue series for faculty and staff to foster authentic relationships across difference and engage topics that impact our campus climate and bear on diversity, equity and inclusion. Two notable segments from last academic year included:

1. Belonging: What Can We Learn about Inclusion from Historically Black Colleges and Universities?
   - Collaboration with faculty and staff colleagues who offered reflections on their experiences of and exposure to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).
   - This Black History Month gathering celebrated and illuminated the unique contributions of HBCUs in propelling excellence and deepened understanding of barriers to belonging and thriving on our campus.

2. Faculty Roundtable—Living the Questions: On Being Jesuit and Catholic in Contemporary Culture (co-hosted with the Office of the Provost)
   - In partnership with faculty members across disciplines, we explored what it means to be Jesuit and Catholic in a complex and dynamic societal culture and how it informs ideas around a range of contemporary issues that bear on fostering inclusive academic excellence.

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UNCOMMON VOICES ON TOPICS THAT MATTER

Alvin Sturdivant, EdD
Vice President for Student Development

Inclusive Excellence Action Plan for Racial Equity and Anti-racism 2020-2021

1. Recruitment and retention of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).
2. Bias prevention and campus climate care.
3. Recruitment and retention of BIPOC faculty and staff.
4. Narrative through art and symbols.
5. Build capacity and invest in infrastructure.

RED TALKS 2019-2020 SEASON

The theme of the 2019-2020 series, Historically Marginalized Male Voices at the Intersection, provided a forum to feature the experiences and expertise from thought leaders whose voices are often deemed far less credible on issues that matter.

The community was inspired by Dr. Alvin Sturdivant’s Red Talk, the singular segment of the season, which focused attention on belonging, voice and place. In I Am Enough: Resilience in a World that Says You Don’t Matter, Dr. Sturdivant offered an authentic perspective on living and working as a Black man and shared his higher education expertise on identity development and what underrepresented students need to thrive on college campuses.

With this year’s international uprising for racial justice, Dr. Sturdivant’s voice rings poignant given the call to action for Black lives.

WHAT IS RED TALKS?

Red Talks is a quarterly speaker series featuring intersectional voices on a range of topics under the umbrella of inclusive excellence at Seattle University. Led by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in partnership with the Office of the Provost, the series aims to elevate faculty voices at SU across disciplines, as well as the voices of prominent thought leaders in the broader community.

SU’s Pursuit of Inclusive Excellence

September 2013
Task Force on Diversity and Inclusive Excellence commissioned

Spring 2015
Campus-wide climate assessment conducted

Fall 2015
Task Force delivers climate survey report and summary

January 2016
Co-chairs delivered final report from Task Force on Diversity and Inclusive Excellence

September 2017
University established position of Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion/Chief Diversity Office

June 2018 – December 2019
Strategic Plan development

September 2019
CDO Natasha Martin and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion become a critical dimension in the Academic Affairs Division

January 2020
Official adoption of the Strategic Directions: A Jesuit University of Distinction for a Time of Change

LIFT SU

Inclusive Excellence Action Plan for Racial Equity and Anti-racism 2020-2021

Listen to Dr. Sturdivant’s talk and the full catalogue from Season 1, Women’s Voices at the Intersection here