2020 Progress Update for the Racial Equity Strategic Plan

In October 2020, each divisional vice president reviewed the institutional goals and priorities for racial equity. With members of their division, the vice presidents submitted an operating plan that outlined the events, programs, and/or initiatives that supported the colleges’ efforts to address racial equity.

This progress update provides a brief overview of the work accomplished within each of our institutional priorities. For a complete progress update on all initiatives identified in last year’s operating plan, please log into the racial equity operating plan on the Canisius College wiki. The college wiki details this information along with the person(s) responsible and the status (complete, incomplete, or in progress) of each project.

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

The New Buffalo Institute defines partnerships as one or more contacts with an organization that result in an outcome that benefits members of the community. In 2019, the NBI reported 106 community partnerships with 55% working to address racial equity and/or providing services to individuals from African, Latinx, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) backgrounds. Although, the number of partnerships decreased in 2020 to 60, 25% of our work in the community addressed social justice issues related to race. For example, the partnership with the Juneteenth of Buffalo resulted in over 4500 individuals accessing the MLK Book Series webinars focused on civil rights, education, employment, and housing. In addition, this partnership assisted with the creation of the campus inaugural Juneteenth Celebration where approximately 60 faculty, staff, and students work with Hamlin Park, Juneteenth Headquarters, and BPS Build Academy. Ninety-five percent of the participants reported that as a result of their engagement in the day, their awareness of the Juneteenth Buffalo organization had increase. Eighty-eight percent also reported that they learned more about the African American culture through the stories shared by the Black Storytellers of WNY. The Women’s Business Center and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) kicked off its Building Allyships program, which is the first of its kind and seeks to create more equitable opportunities for women of color entrepreneurs.

Curriculum & Academic Initiatives: Deconstructing Whiteness in the classroom, and ensuring our curriculum addresses race and racism.

As referenced in a proposal to the academic program board, AACU challenges postsecondary institutions, colleges, and universities to cultivate an environment where all students can thrive. One of the major pillar’s in this work is, “To focus on student intellectual and social development by offering the best possible course of study for the context in which the education is offered” (Williams, D.A., Berger, J.B., and McClendon, S.A., 2005). This further highlights the importance of core curriculum committee and its efforts to revise the diversity and global attributes. Currently there is general agreement that the two attributes should be jointly devoted, “To deepened awareness of the lived experiences of people and the (social) causes of those experiences.” While this work continues, there have been changes in the Honors Program. The two Western Civilization course requirements have been replaced with Intro to Philosophy and HON 101 (English). In addition, a formal proposal has been developed and submitted to the academic program board for a race and ethnic studies major.
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.

Educational programs play an important role in creating an environment where individuals can engage in dialogue and reflection. Over the last academic year, several departments and offices have collaborated to offer approximately 246 programs, 10% of the programs offered have addressed issues of race. This compares to 300 programs in 2019 with 9% addressing issues race and 392 in 2018 with 11% addressing race (Campus events and scheduling, 2021). Currently, there are eight offices and/or departments that contribute programs to the building community and a sense of belonging series, which seeks to reduce scheduling conflicts and increase cross department promotion of events and offerings. The athletics department in collaboration with the Institute for Sports and Social Justice hosted a number of required workshops. This initiative was in conjunction with the efforts of the student athletic advisory committee. SAAC engaged in voter registration and hosted monthly discussions. In addition, the athletic department implemented several MAAC United for Justice Campaign initiatives (including a media campaign, reading programs at schools, BLM floor decals and jersey patches, etc.).

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

The framework of intersectionality (coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989) creates space for recognizing the ways in which race, gender, sexuality, class, etc. function simultaneously within lives of individuals. Furthermore, this context allows for the institution to recognize the compounding effects of structures of inequity. Much of this work was featured in the Borders & Migration series, the Always Our Children (AOC) retreat, First Gen programs, and the Fitzpatrick Lecture Series; in addition to several other programs. This was evident in the nearly 246 programs offered in 2021 with 9% addressing an intersectional context, compared 10 % in 2019 (n=30) and 6% in 2018 (n=23) (Campus events and scheduling, 2021). This framework can be utilized in decision making, policy review, and policy development.

Recruitment & Retention: Creating structures and practices that provide access, development, and recognition of faculty, staff, and students.

Recent budget decisions have impacted the institution’s ability to continue to build diverse and talented teams. The office of human resources has increased its posting strategy through Diversityjobs. The platform is linked to the following employment sources: Africanamericanhires.com, Allbilingualjobs.com, Allhispanicjobs.com, Alllgbtjobs.com, Asianhires.com, Blackcareers.org, Disabilityjobs.net, Latinojobs.org, Nativejobs.com, Overfiftyjobs.com, Veteranjobs.net, and Wehirewomen.com. A draft of the diversity and hiring policy has been prepared along with a proposed structure to capture staff contributions within performance programs. Attention has also been given to retention strategies, which include the early development of employee resource groups. ERGs can serve as valuable resources to an institution e.g. hiring, access to networks, and feedback.
The demographics of students, staff, and faculty in 2020 were as follows:

- **Undergraduate Students**
  - White: 70.2% (1391)
  - ALANA: 21.7% (431)

- **Graduate Students**
  - White: 76.3% (641)
  - ALANA: 15.6% (131)

- **Staff**
  - White: 83% (258)
  - ALANA: 15% (47)

- **Faculty**
  - White: 89% (124)
  - ALANA: 11% (15)

- **Adjunct Faculty**
  - White: 92% (153)
  - ALANA: 8% (13)

(Institutional Research, 2021)

The data represents a decrease in ALANA staff by 11 persons, ALANA faculty by 4 persons, and ALANA adjunct faculty by 6 persons from 2019. For additional information, please see Canisius College wiki for diversity and inclusion.

**Training & Skill Building: Increasing institutional capacity to address racial equity by developing the awareness, knowledge, and skills of all members of the college.**

There were several training and skill building opportunities available to students, staff, and faculty. This would include the ALANA Student Center workshop series, DEI Everfi training at new student orientation, RA and OL training, the Wrestling with Whiteness Institute, AJCU Conference for Diversity and Equity, Buffalo Niagara Partnership Diversity Symposium, Addressing Racism in Hiring workshop, workshops sponsored by the Institute for Sports & Social Justice, etc. There were approximately 150 employees and over 400 students who participated throughout the year.

In the fall 2020, 91% of first year students reported that as result of the DEI Everfi training that they were prepared to engage in ally behavior. Eighty percent expressed interest in learning more about diversity, equity, and inclusion and 87% indicated that they had the ability to respectfully communicate with others.

In addition, the college has implemented a bias resource and response team. The eighteen members participated in a number of readings to gain knowledge and skills regarding Title IX, trauma informed practices, community standards, etc.

*Overall, there were 61 items identified in the racial equity operating plan in 2020-2021, with 80% being completed. There is more work to be done to address structural and institutional barriers. To this point, the senior leadership team and deans, along with members of the staff, and Jesuit community who participated in the anti-racism examen prioritized reviewing and revising institutional policies. Beginning this year, the annual racial equity operating plans will include the review and revision of one policy.*

*I am extremely grateful to the college community for its commitment to this important work.*

*If you are aware of additional programs and/or initiatives that should be included in last year’s operating plan, please feel free to share this with me at rodrig23@canisius.edu.*