

**Final Report and Recommendations of the  
Board Special Committee on University Climate,  
Diversity and Inclusion**



**Syracuse University**

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## **A Vision of a Diverse, Inclusive and Accessible Campus**

The University's overall vision and mission explicitly assume that excellence and future positive trajectory require a richly diverse community of learning and opportunity. That community must be one in which students, faculty and staff of all backgrounds are assured that they belong and that they share equally in an ambitious and rigorous academic community in which they learn, create, lead, inspire, engage, debate and grow with one another to the benefit of all.

This cannot happen unless all University stakeholders manifest and work constantly to achieve a diverse, equitable, inclusive and respectful campus community each day and in all our practices and experiences. In such a community, all individuals both contribute to and benefit from learning from multiple points of view, backgrounds, life experiences, ethnicities, cultures, races and belief systems.

At its best through its long history, Syracuse University has modeled creative and bold firsts and leadership consistent with this vision. However, at times, the University has fallen short of its values, but the community has learned and grown from those experiences as well. The University can continue to lead now, and will do so by listening to all voices, including by respecting free speech, even when the messages are challenging and require the community to hear difficult things.

## **Incidents of Hate and the National Context**

Like most American universities, Syracuse University has been the scene of social justice activism for many decades in response to a variety of issues. Incidents of bias and hate and a perceived lack of meaningful action have been at the heart of many demonstrations on the University's campus, dating back decades. In the last few years, there have been several significant anti-bias demonstrations at Syracuse University—in 2014, 2018 and again in 2019 and 2020.

Syracuse University is not alone. There have been similar demonstrations on many campuses around the nation. Although not clear to many at the time, the intensity of the campus activism in the last few years has signaled that the broader national dialogue was shifting, and society was in a different place. Accordingly, the participants—at Syracuse and on other campuses—expected a more immediate and meaningful response from the University.

In many ways, the Syracuse University demonstrations of the 2019-20 academic year were a harbinger of a broader, national reaction against racism, the role of the police and other inequities that would grip the nation in the wake of the killing of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis police. In cities and communities around the country, thousands of activists, allies and concerned citizens took to the streets. It was an outpouring of anger and disappointment at the levels of racism and bias tolerance in America and led to specific demands in many areas related to the broad topics of institutional racism and police reform.

## **The Board Special Committee on University Climate, Diversity and Inclusion**

Amidst this shift in the national dialogue and campus activism, the Board of Trustees of Syracuse University (Board) commissioned the Special Committee on University Climate, Diversity and Inclusion (Special Committee) to provide insight into the campus climate, and to

generate recommendations for the Board and University leadership. Consistent with the role of all Board committees, the Special Committee's work has been in close coordination with University leadership and has been advisory to the full Board.

### ***Purpose and Charter***

The Special Committee's purpose and charter is aligned with the University's mission and strategy as to diversity, equity and inclusion. In announcing the creation of the Special Committee, the Board noted that:

*With the formation of the Special Committee, the Board affirms its vision and commitment to build on the work that is already underway to foster a campus climate that is safe, diverse, inclusive and welcoming to everyone. The goal of our work is to establish Syracuse University as a leader in higher education and beyond by modeling the values of a diverse and inclusive society on our campus, while fostering a culture at Syracuse University that is supportive and welcoming to all people and prepares our students to be leaders in our diverse world.*

The Special Committee's work has been forward looking. It was not established to investigate the bias incidents that have taken place or engage in a retrospective assessment of the past. Nor was it formed to serve as a monitor of the actions committed to by the University. Rather, the Special Committee's focus was to review those policies, practices and resources needed to promote diversity and inclusion, to address the safety and well-being of University community members and to promote a campus climate consistent with the University's values and strategic vision. In doing so, the Special Committee developed recommendations, contained herein, intended to hold the University accountable for continuous, sustainable action to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility for the whole of the campus community and in all parts of University life.

### ***Composition and Activity***

The Special Committee is comprised of seven members of the Executive Committee of the Board—Kathleen Walters, chair of the Board and the chairs of the Finance (Lisa Fontenelli), Advancement and External Affairs (Larry Kramer), Enrollment and the Student Experience (Rey Pascual) and Academic Affairs (Christine Larsen) Committees and co-leads Richard Alexander and Jeffrey Scruggs. The first meeting of the Special Committee occurred on December 19, 2019, and it met regularly since its inception.

The Special Committee has commissioned several projects and reports to help shape its thinking and provide important input into the final recommendations. These inputs are detailed below, but clearly the most impactful was the Special Committee's visit to campus in February 2020, when it met with campus stakeholders, a key set of listening engagements that have shaped many of the recommendations in this report. From direct observations and external reports, this report contains a set of recommendations predicated on the University's mission, values and strategic plan. Many of the recommendations dovetail with actions already taken by University leadership to address campus challenges.

### ***Observations and Additional Studies***

To assist in its deliberations, the Special Committee requested:

- I. information regarding diversity and inclusion investments and challenges at peer universities;

- II. a comprehensive survey of all diversity, inclusion and accessibility assets at Syracuse University;
- III. a pulse survey to establish a baseline of the campus climate and general feelings of students, faculty and staff; and
- IV. the informed observations and recommendations of an independent panel of experts.

The Special Committee sought to ensure that the resources brought online following the demonstrations in 2014, 2018 and 2019 were fully utilized, well understood and non-duplicative, and were consistent with best practices on other campuses.<sup>1</sup> More than that, though, the Special Committee sought to understand which investments were most effective, and where the University should focus its energy, resources and attention to best improve the campus climate.

To gain a better understanding of the issues, the Special Committee planned two visits to campus for the purpose of engaging directly with the campus community. On Feb. 12 and 13, 2020, Special Committee members visited Syracuse for a series of dialogue sessions with the campus community. Over those two days, Special Committee members met with 17 groups of students, faculty and staff, among others, which groups were assembled by cohort, to provide the Special Committee a broad view.<sup>2</sup> The prevalent themes heard by the Special Committee provide the basis for the Special Committee's 10 recommendations, detailed below.

The Special Committee also hired the Center for Strategic Diversity Leadership and Social Innovation (CSDLSI) for subject matter expertise and support. Among other roles, the CSDLSI team facilitated the February engagement sessions and served as process managers and subject matter experts. The CSDLSI team created a framework in each session so that there could be open and transparent engagement with the members of the Special Committee in attendance. The result was a series of candid and productive discussions that increased the Special Committee's understanding of the campus climate and the challenges facing Syracuse University and other academic institutions.

The Special Committee also assembled an Independent Advisory Panel (Panel) of experts who brought direct experience and knowledge on key issues of diversity, inclusion and campus climate to the process.<sup>3</sup> The Panel met several times during the Spring 2020 semester, including during two visits to campus to engage with stakeholders.

### ***Timelines and Additional Work***

Following the February campus visits by members of the Special Committee, the next steps in the Special Committee's timetable were a planned rollout of a pulse survey and campus engagements by the Panel. The shift from residential course delivery to online course delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted campus operations and changed some of

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<sup>1</sup> The Center for Strategic Diversity Leadership and Social Innovation (CSDLSI), led by Dr. Damon Williams, conducted and managed many of the activities commissioned by the Special Committee, including the Diversity Inventory, the Campus Climate Pulse Survey, the study of peer institutions' DEIA investments. CSDLSI also helped manage the Independent Panel.

<sup>2</sup> A schedule and list of groups can be found in [Appendix A](#).

<sup>3</sup> The Independent Advisory Panel included Eric Fingerhut, president and CEO, The Jewish Federations of North America; Karol Mason, president, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and former assistant U.S. attorney general, Office of Justice Programs; Damon Williams, founder of Atlanta-based Center for Strategic Diversity Leadership and Social Innovation (CSDLSI); and Frank H. Wu, the William L. Prosser Distinguished Professor of Law, University of California, Hastings College of the Law.

the Special Committee's and Panel's timing. Nevertheless, the Special Committee was able to complete its planned studies and activities as follows:

- **The Special Committee's engagements with campus stakeholders in February 2020** was unaffected by the pandemic, and as previously noted, the Special Committee met with 17 different cohorts of students, faculty and staff.
- **The Special Committee's planned second trip to campus** in April 2020 was cancelled due to the pandemic, and public health restrictions on the residential campus which also prohibited a return visit during the Fall 2020 semester.
- **The Independent Advisory Panel of experts** visited campus twice in early 2020, when it met with a wide array of students, faculty and staff. Most of the Panel's observations are consistent with the vision statement found at the beginning of this report, with its recommendations found at the end. The Panel's observations also provided excellent context and background for the Special Committee.<sup>4</sup>
- **The peer study of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) assets and investments** was completed in spring 2020.
- **The inventory of campus DEIA assets and programs** was launched in March 2020, but tabled until the fall, given that the work was to be done by the same staff responsible for crucial parts of the transition to online course delivery.
- **Deploying the campus climate pulse survey** during the spring 2020 semester was impractical as the campus moved to fully online course delivery, and the effort was tabled until the fall semester when residential instruction could start. Ultimately, the survey launched on September 16, and remained open for five weeks. The Special Committee has received a preliminary summary of the pulse survey, and while far more data is forthcoming, the pulse survey has validated many of the Special Committee's observations, provided a baseline for measuring the impact of University actions, and even though the pulse survey highlights real challenges in the campus culture, it provides reason for optimism for the Special Committee and for the University.

In addition, the Special Committee provided input to former U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch, who led the [independent evaluation](#) of the Department of Public Safety (DPS). While this independent review was technically outside the scope of the Special Committee, it deals with reforms in an area of intense interest to the Special Committee, and therefore may be viewed as an important ancillary activity.

### **The Framework Document**

In July 2020, in consultation with University leadership, the Special Committee prepared a 10-point framework of steps to address the campus climate in a comprehensive manner, "with accountability, transparency and integrity."

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<sup>4</sup> A report from the Independent Advisory Panel can be found in [Appendix F](#).

The Framework preamble’s vision statements reflect the breadth and depth of the Board’s commitment to the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. This preamble is the cornerstone of the vision statement found at the beginning of this final report, stating that diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility are vital to the future of the University, and must be fully adopted in everything the University does—from pedagogy to residence life to compensation to real estate transactions. The Framework represents the broad scope of the challenge facing the University and provides a template for the presentation of the final recommendations.

Ensuring appropriate progress across a broad range of activities represented in the recommendations will require continued engagement by all campus stakeholders, including the Board, and this report recommends mechanisms for appropriate ongoing Board strategic oversight and engagement to facilitate appropriate resourcing. Taken together, the Special Committee believes that the recommendations and actions will advance the cause of building a stronger, more diverse and more inclusive University, and will help all members of the Syracuse University community act with accountability, transparency and integrity to advance this mission and vision.

All recommendations in this final report are organized under the Framework categories.

### ***Framework Recommendations***

The recommendations are detailed below, as well as in the appendices, but can be summarized in the following 10 points. Note that each of these relates directly to advancing DEIA efforts in campus culture, staffing, pedagogy, resource allocation and communications. The Special Committee will work in conjunction with the relevant Board Committees with primary jurisdiction over the specific areas of recommendations to provide oversight and accountability.

1. Enhance faculty diversity and change culture in academic departments.
2. Promote curriculum enhancements and other pedagogical changes.
3. Enhance residence life.
4. Solidify diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility training and programming for all campus stakeholders.
5. Upgrade communications responses to bias incidents.
6. Incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility into facilities planning.
7. Leverage diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility investments campuswide, and invest in the office of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer to broaden impact and implement best practices.
8. Effectively implement existing Campus Commitments.
9. Address issues of transparency and accountability with respect to the Department of Public Safety.
10. Provide for ongoing Board strategic oversight of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility activities.

### **Recommendation Details**

The following provides broad details on the issues captured in the 10 points above. Further detail can be found in the appendices. For almost all these observations and recommendations, the Special Committee acknowledges that University leadership has

ongoing and future work. In some cases, the Special Committee’s recommendations are a validation of the appropriateness of this ongoing activity. In other areas, modifications or new activities are suggested. As noted above, the Special Committee will work in conjunction with the relevant Board committees to provide ongoing oversight and accountability, with a focus on the effectiveness and sustainability of the efforts and that activities are in line with the vision and mission of the University.

**1. Faculty: Provide the financial and operational support and commitment to accelerate diverse faculty hiring, retention and career development.**

During the campus visit in February 2020, the Special Committee heard from both students and faculty that faculty diversity is inadequate, and faculty diversity does not match the diversity of the student body and other parts of the campus community. There is a perceived lack of effort on the part of the University to recruit and retain both female and underrepresented minority faculty. There is a widespread perception that the diversity of the faculty is getting worse, aided by an outflow of underrepresented minorities, a lack of resources for retention and implicit bias in the tenure and promotion processes. While the data do not support some of these conclusions, there is a lack of representative diversity in many departments, and there are pockets of entrenched practices at the department level that hinder recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority faculty.

**Recommendation:** At the request of the Special Committee, Academic Affairs staff developed a proposal for an expansion of the existing faculty diversity hiring initiative. The full proposal can be found in [Appendix B](#). The Special Committee strongly endorses this plan, and recommends that it be funded, publicized and implemented by Academic Affairs. The Special Committee will oversee the ongoing implementation, and will monitor the success of the programs.

In short, the faculty diversity hiring initiative proposal commits the University to spend up to \$50M over the next 10 years to build appropriate programs to diversify the full-time faculty, build a postdoctoral student pipeline into disciplines that have traditionally found it difficult to attract and retain underrepresented minorities, and invest in recruitment and retention efforts to change the culture at the department level. If fully utilized, the faculty hiring program can bring to the University up to 70 new faculty members from underrepresented minority groups and approximately 100 new postdoctoral fellows. The plan will also invest \$5M in recruitment and retention, leverage current programs (like spousal hiring), and help advance other University objectives like enhancing research and teaching excellence and bolstering the institution’s Carnegie R1 status.

**2. Curriculum: Continue to work with affected stakeholders in the development and implementation of curriculum offerings that further the University’s diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility goals and objectives.**

From almost every student group with which they met, the Special Committee heard dissatisfaction with SEM 100, the University’s required “course” to address identity and

bias issues for all first year students.<sup>5</sup> Originally implemented after the 2018 bias incident, SEM 100 was intended to be an interim solution, in advance of a permanent curricular enhancement to build a required course—or courses—that would build the core competencies for students around DEIA issues. However, this temporary status is not widely known and, amongst students, the plans for the future of this curricular approach is also not widely known. Accordingly, the unhappiness with SEM 100 is acute in the absence of any widespread knowledge of planned curricular enhancements.

The Special Committee also heard from some faculty and students that other requirements for the liberal arts core should be reevaluated. Proposals ranged from a wholesale overhaul and implementation of a new general education curriculum to more modest proposals like upper-level diversity and inclusion course requirements.

**A. Recommendation: Replace SEM 100 with “First Year Seminar.”**

The Special Committee acknowledges and supports the efforts made to enhance the existing SEM 100 program for all first-year students for academic year 2020-21.<sup>6</sup> The Special Committee also commends the University Senate and faculty in the schools and colleges for passing the one-credit, required First Year Seminar (FYS), and looks forward to the implementation of this course in academic year 2021-22.<sup>7</sup>

**B. Recommendation: Add upper-level required curricular choices.**

The Special Committee also acknowledges and supports the University Senate for passing a requirement for all upper-level undergraduate students to choose a three-credit course from an approved list,<sup>8</sup> which will fully engage students in principles of DEIA, through several different disciplinary lenses. This reinforcement of the ideas introduced in the FYS is consistent with the University’s “shared competencies” approach to accreditation requirements and provides ample choice for upper-level students.

**C. Recommendation: Support ongoing curriculum discussion.**

The Special Committee heard from faculty members and has read petitions about a vision of a more ambitious core curriculum for all undergraduates. The Special Committee understands that given the highly regimented nature of many curricula in the professional schools, such a core curriculum would be challenging to implement.

The Special Committee also knows that at the school and college level, some deans and department chairs are working to build DEIA principles into their core curriculum. The Special Committee strongly encourages all schools and colleges to follow suit.

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<sup>5</sup> Known as SEM 100, this 7.5 hour experiential class is co-facilitated by staff/faculty lead facilitators and a student facilitator, and carries 0 credits but the grade is linked to the required first year course in the students’ college of enrollment.

<sup>6</sup> For the 2020-21 academic year, and for use into the future, SEM 100 is using videos produced to tell the history of the University from the perspective of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. Videos can be found in [Appendix C](#).

<sup>7</sup> See [Appendix D](#) for the approved curriculum for FYS 101.

<sup>8</sup> See [Appendix E](#) for the list of 72 course choices. Almost all schools and colleges have at least one course listed.

That said, the Special Committee acknowledges that curricula is the sole purview of the faculty. Accordingly, the Special Committee supports debate in the University Senate and will be watching the deliberations carefully. In the meantime, the Special Committee commends the faculty for passing the current proposals for first-year and upper-level course requirements as either an interim or a permanent curricular enhancement, and is enthusiastic about the academic-unit level progress on DEIA.

#### **D. Recommendation: Citizenship and/or Civics.**

The Special Committee recommends that the Provost and faculty consider a course requirement in Citizenship and/or Civics. Given the increasing polarization of our national discourse and the coarsening of national dialogue on political and social issues, civics and citizenship are more important now than perhaps ever before. Additionally, the University is home to two best-in-class schools—namely the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and the Newhouse School of Public Communications—that can deliver the finest courses available anywhere on this subject. The Special Committee encourages the Provost and the University Senate to leverage these assets on behalf of all undergraduates and consider a mandatory undergraduate course (or selection of courses) in Civics and/or Citizenship.

### **3. *Residence Life and Housing: Address perceived disparities in student housing and better equip the residence life team to meet the needs of multicultural students.***

The Special Committee heard from multiple student groups about deficiencies in housing and residence life staffing. Examples of perceived deficiencies range from not feeling safe in the residence halls to not enough affinity group choices in residence life to not trusting resident advisors (RAs) to help students manage through bias incidents to not having adequate multicultural food options in the dining halls.

These shortcomings have led to frustration and a sense that the University is not well-equipped to manage bias incidents when they happen in the residence halls. The Special Committee believes that in the context of managing bias incidents, especially those in the residence halls, the RA role is crucial. At Syracuse University, this role must not be either under-resourced or allowed to fall out of step with best practices for student support in the residence halls.

The Special Committee also heard from various student groups that many in their communities and in other student populations have a sense of not feeling safe in the residence halls. The students have expressed frustrations about residence life directly to staff, and residence life issues represent four of the 31 published campus concerns.

Accordingly, although encouraging action has been taken by the University in some areas of residence life, the Special Committee recommends that the Board's various relevant committees maintain a focus on this crucial area, to ensure that the University residence halls are resourced and overseen appropriately to provide a safe and welcoming environment for our students, and that their RAs and staff are well-equipped to help

manage bias incidents for those students who consider these facilities home for much of the year.

**Recommendation: Address and remediate staffing deficiencies in housing, security and residence life.**

**A. Office of Student Living and Resident Advisors.**

The Special Committee encourages the Office of Student Living (OSL) to monitor the evolution of the RA program carefully, and to study best practices at other universities. While it is true that RAs are among the most diverse student leadership teams on campus with 62 percent of RAs identifying as students of color, and most receiving some form of financial aid, the background of the RA cohort does not ensure their preparedness to manage the complex challenges of today's resident student population, which currently exceeds 8,000 students. Additionally, while pre-arrival and arrival orientation and ongoing programming for both RAs and students has evolved over time, and the University has invested in this area, this area, too, requires continuous improvement. Accordingly, the Special Committee suggests that the director of OSL work with the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (CDIO) to implement best practices, as appropriate.

As a critically important first step, the OSL will hire a senior director for diversity, equity and inclusion to work with residence hall staff to understand their training needs and the needs of residential students around diversity, equity and inclusion. The senior director will lead training and programming in these areas. This position has been hired and is currently in place.<sup>9</sup> The Special Committee acknowledges and supports these actions and will be part of ongoing strategic oversight.

**B. Residence Hall Security.**

Various student groups expressed concerns to the Special Committee and University leadership about physical safety in the residence halls. Accordingly, in spring 2020, DPS hired 96 residential community safety officers and coordinators to provide 24/7 security for all campus residence halls.

The Special Committee recommends that these security personnel liaise with the Office of the CDIO to ensure that their presence and programming is consistent with other activities to enhance the campus climate.

**C. Disparities in housing arrangements for on-campus residents.**

The Special Committee is aware that the housing stock of the University currently is under review. Nevertheless, several issues surfaced for the Special Committee regarding the status quo of housing that has an impact on campus climate. Historically, a greater percentage of students of color select South Campus apartments for their sophomore on-campus housing. These students indicate that they select South Campus because the apartments provide a more independent living environment and a meal plan is not required, which lowers the sticker price for housing.

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<sup>9</sup> Details on Resident Advisor training can be found in [Appendix G](#).

Tensions have emerged for South Campus residents with regards to policy enforcement. Because South Campus is a part of the University campus, DPS patrols the area and enforces the Code of Student Conduct. Black students have indicated that they believe they are subjected to a higher level of surveillance and more adverse disciplinary consequences than their white peers living in fraternity and sorority houses on Walnut and Comstock avenues. Walnut and Comstock avenues are located off-campus in the jurisdiction of the Syracuse Police Department where there is seldom enforcement of underage drinking, open alcohol containers and noise violations. Further complicating this issue is the perception by many that South Campus apartments are beyond their expected lifespan, in need of significant renovation and repair, and are visually unattractive. This has had the unintended consequence of the perceived marginalization of these students.

The Student, Faculty and Staff Housing Committee worked with consultants Brailsford and Dunlavey to conduct a housing study and develop a long-term housing strategy. While the final report and recommendations are still being finalized, the consultant's findings confirmed students' dissatisfaction with living on South Campus and supported moving many student residences to North Campus through a series of renovations and new construction. North Campus options that offer independent living appropriate for sophomore students is endorsed by the Campus Framework and should be part of this plan.

While moving all student residences to North Campus would require a significant financial commitment, such an investment would better integrate student populations, reinforce living/learning communities housed near the academic center of campus, significantly upgrade the quality of the residential student experience, and together with other actions listed above, would address long-standing campus climate challenges. Such an investment is a multi-year process, so in the interim, the Special Committee recommends that the University continue to develop solutions to address feelings of alienation amongst the residents of South Campus, and to clearly advertise current living options. The Special Committee recommends that the housing study explicitly focus on DEIA issues in its next iteration, and that the division of Enrollment and the Student Experience and the Housing office work closely with the CDIO on action steps the University can take now.

4. ***Training: Improve the education of all stakeholders (Board, University leadership, faculty, students and staff) in diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, in ways responsive to the deficits and gaps that have been manifested in each constituency. This includes, for example, strengthened diversity programming for faculty and other stakeholders that creates greater accountability with respect to our mission and expectations.***

The Special Committee and the Panel heard a number of comments from students about issues in the classroom environment. Some students were vocal and adamant about a lack of understanding of diverse cultures and lived experiences by faculty and instructors and pointed to explicit examples of behavior they felt was objectionable. Staff and faculty pointed to some areas of the University—in certain academic departments, administrative offices and other units—where there were similar problems, ranging from a general lack of awareness about the sensitivities of some in the community to a seriously challenging

culture for many. And while there is an acknowledgement that there have been some trainings and programming on DEIA, there was a consistent theme that: (a) some trainings are better than others, (b) trainings need to be ongoing and part of a continuous improvement program, (c) the scope, sequence and requirements need to be effectively advertised and (d) each training module needs to include a program to measure effectiveness.

While the Special Committee acknowledges that some of this is underway, much more needs to happen to achieve the DEIA vision and goals of the University inside the classroom.

**Recommendation: Implement required diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility programming for faculty, staff and Board members.**

**Faculty:** The trainings offered by Faculty Affairs, both through the Faculty Diversity Institute—a program that runs each semester and in the summer, and has, to date, trained over 1,000 faculty members in DEIA principles—and through the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence should be noted as effective steps that are applauded. Coupled with the mandated trainings of all new faculty, and the trainings mandated by the deans in some schools and colleges, the University has made progress in addressing in-classroom challenges.

That said, the Special Committee strongly encourages the Provost to mandate annual trainings for all faculty—tenured and non-tenured, adjunct and full-time—on implicit bias, inclusive classroom, anti-racism and managing crucial conversations. The Provost should also strongly encourage training in modern curriculum design.<sup>10</sup>

Syracuse University classrooms—both physical and virtual—have for some of our students felt unwelcoming for a variety of reasons. This is a driver of profound concern among the students with whom the Special Committee met. While no institution can fully remediate all challenging behavior, it can mandate training for all stakeholders—faculty, students, teaching assistants and associate staff—to ensure, insofar as it is possible, that such behavior does not go unaddressed. The effectiveness and accountability of these trainings will be part of ongoing Board oversight.

**Staff:** These mandatory trainings need to be extended to the staff of the University as well. While it is true that many business and academic units have already implemented outstanding DEIA training—in many cases mandatory—there are not University-wide standards or mandates for such training. It is the strong recommendation of the Special Committee to administer and/or monitor such programming through the Office of the CDIO.

**Board:** The Special Committee further recommends that programming and education in these areas be extended to the Board. As stewards of the University, and as sponsors of

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<sup>10</sup> The Committee recommends that the Office of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer find ways to baseline the community, and measure improvements generated by these trainings and other DEIA interventions and investments.

this report, it is vital that, to the extent appropriate and actionable, Trustees engage in similar vital discussions that we are asking of others in our community. This programming should be built into the new trustee orientation and can be expanded as appropriate for the full Board.

**Recommendation: Accessibility training and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance.**

Finally, and consistent with the findings of the Disability External Review Committee (DERC), the Special Committee applauds the University's recent mandates on accessibility and belonging.<sup>11</sup> A key to accessibility in both the physical and digital classroom and across all campus facilities and programs is in a vigorous application of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).<sup>12</sup> The Special Committee applauds the DERC recommendations to enhance the role of the ADA Coordinator, and encourages the University and the Office of the CDIO to work to change the culture in the classroom and in academic and business unit departments. The Special Committee recommends that the CDIO and ADA Coordinator work together to ensure that respecting accessibility evolves from being perceived as merely a compliance issue to becoming a part of the general expectations of all faculty and staff to expand accessibility, which expectation is set by the Provost and senior leadership, reinforced at the department level, and enhanced by a continuous improvement cycle of trainings and professional development for faculty and staff.

**5. *Communications: Improve University communications as to its principles, priorities and transparency, with particular attention to safety issues and the reporting of bias incidents.***

The Special Committee and University leadership have come to understand deficiencies in campus communications, and they are included in the Campus Commitments. Of particular note were stated concerns about the veracity and transparency of the University's communications on bias incidents. The Special Committee—and University leadership—seek to rebuild confidence in University communications, and to help the University community gauge the gravity and seriousness of the issues addressed in University communications.

The communication challenges have manifested in student and community frustration and also in observed challenges with misunderstanding information or the propagation of misinformation. Accordingly, the Special Committee recommends work in the following areas:

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<sup>11</sup> The Disability External Review Committee's interim report can be found at <https://news.syr.edu/blog/2020/09/14/university-adopts-disability-external-review-committees-phase-one-recommendations/>. The Chancellor's acknowledgement and acceptance of the findings can be found at <https://news.syr.edu/blog/2020/09/14/embracing-the-disability-community-as-one-university/>.

<sup>12</sup> This includes all categories of accessibility—for the physically disabled and also for those with disabilities that are not visible.

- Revised Approach to Bias Incident Reports and Bias and Safety Email Communications<sup>13</sup>

*The Special Committee heard repeated issues of frustration with the speed, tonality and accuracy of bias incident reporting, particularly in fall 2019, when there was a spate of bias incidents.*

- Creation of the Campus Commitments Webpage and Corresponding Email Calendar

*The Special Committee heard from the community that holding University leadership accountable for commitments made is very important.*

- Social Media Monitoring, Engagement and Proactive Content Distribution

*The Special Committee is concerned by the propagation of misinformation or highly misleading information on social media channels. This phenomenon was documented by the Panel and is a function of both the current generation’s savvy with video and social media, and the societal challenge of a widespread degradation of legitimacy in news sources. The dual challenges of the ubiquity of “fake news” paired with short form formats like TikTok and Instagram require new approaches from the University.*

The Special Committee acknowledges and supports actions in these areas, detailed in [Appendix H](#), and will be part of its ongoing strategic oversight.

- 6. Facilities: Incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility perspectives more holistically into facilities planning to more effectively integrate the campus and reflect the University’s values. Additionally, invest in the facilities needs of campus affinity groups.***

As discussed in the Residence Life section of this report (Recommendation 3), campus facilities play an important role in campus climate. Accordingly, the Special Committee recommends that the Campus Framework and all facilities planning should include DEIA goals and objectives.

**A. Recommendation: Provide adequate convening space to support multicultural groups.**

During the February 2020 campus visit, the Special Committee heard from various affinity groups about the inadequacy of convening and administrative facilities. This sentiment was validated by the Panel, the DEIA inventory and the pulse survey<sup>14</sup>. Facilities

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<sup>13</sup> [The Report](#) resulting from the review of DPS by Loretta Lynch (Recommendation 9) includes meaningful suggestions regarding DPS-generated bias reporting. The Special Committee, or its successor committee if approved by the Board, will oversee the implementation of those recommendations.

<sup>14</sup> The Pulse survey found that most Syracuse University students can find communities where they feel accepted and safe on campus. This is an emerging strength of the University, and the Special

challenges limited groups from various constituencies in their formal programming, which included needs for offices, private spaces conducive to confidential conversations, convening spaces for programming and comfortable spaces for general gathering.

Many of the groups expressed concerns that during the construction of the Hildegarde and J. Myer Schine Student Center (Schine Student Center), the temporary locations were sub-optimal, and while they hoped for some immediate relief from the constraints of their temporary location, they looked forward to the new space in a remodeled facility. Other groups expressed that they were not interested in moving to the Schine Student Center and they sought alternative sites.

In particular, the Special Committee is aware that the multicultural Greek councils—comprised of underrepresented minority fraternities and sororities—have long needed such space, as most of their representative organizations do not have chapter houses.<sup>15</sup> Other multicultural groups expressed some concern over the lack of convening space in the remodeled Schine Student Center, and in particular, the Indigenous student community expressed that they sought to avoid relocating to the remodeled Schine Student Center and instead preferred to remain in the facility they currently occupy, with an aspiration to move to a future new facility.

The Special Committee will strategically oversee University leadership’s ongoing implementation of actions in these areas, detailed in [Appendix I](#).

**B. Recommendation: Develop and implement an accessibility plan for University buildings.**

During its campus visit, which was validated by reports from the Panel and from the DERC, the Special Committee learned about some of the unique challenges facing the disabled community at the University.<sup>16</sup> While there is widespread admiration for the academic research, pedagogy and programming on disability at the University, there is a view that this level of excellence is not matched in the commitment to services and access for the disabled at the University.<sup>17</sup>

The DERC, which ran in parallel with the Special Committee, did a deep dive into areas for improvement, and the Special Committee commends the University for accepting in

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Committee recommends that the Office of the CDIO, and relevant units in Academic Affairs and Enrollment and the Student Experience build strategies to leverage and expand upon this strength.

<sup>15</sup>The six Councils are: Interfraternity Council (IFC), Multicultural Greek Council (MGC), National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), Panhellenic Council (PHC) and Professional Fraternity Council (PFC).

<sup>16</sup> The DERC was charged in spring 2018 to hire a dispassionate third-party expert to evaluate the University’s investments and implementation of programming, services, staffing, pedagogy and training to meet the needs of the disabled community. The Review was to identify gaps, make recommendations on enhancements based on best practices from other universities, and prioritize needs so the University could maximize its efforts on accessibility and anti-ableism. The DERC submitted its interim report in June 2020. The Chancellor accepted the recommendations in a message to the community in September 2020, which can be found at <https://news.syr.edu/blog/2020/09/14/embracing-the-disability-community-as-one-university/>.

<sup>17</sup> The centers of excellence include the Burton Blatt Institute in the College of Law, the Center for Disability and Inclusion, the Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education, Disability Studies program and Inclusive U in the School of Education, and individual expertise in several schools and colleges.

total the interim recommendations. Insofar as it relates to facilities, the Special Committee heard concern about accessibility in the existing infrastructure (“the built environment”) and in new construction. As reported in the Campus Commitments section below, action has been taken on both, but because these are long-term commitments requiring long-term investment, the University will need ongoing vigilance to ensure that the plans and progress made to date continue into future investment and implementation.

The Special Committee will continue to strategically oversee University leadership’s implementation of action in these areas as well, also documented in [Appendix I](#).

7. ***CDIO: Increase financial and operational support for a centralized Diversity, Equity and Inclusion function that will assist in the development and implementation of Universitywide programs to advance the University’s DEIA goals and objectives; and, using the Inventory and peer study, work with the individual colleges and operating units to leverage best practices throughout the University.***

The creation of the Office of the CDIO was an important addition to the University’s approach to diversity and inclusion, and the CDIO is an important part of the Executive Team of the University. While the CDIO role has been in place for some time, the position was filled with a permanent Officer only in May 2019. The current CDIO spent most of the 2019-20 academic year working on the campus climate challenges and, therefore, could not progress significantly in the process of assessing and building the DEIA foundation at the University.

During the February visit, the Special Committee heard repeatedly about a perceived lack of a centralized diversity and inclusion strategy, tied closely with the University’s mission and strategic plan. While most participants knew that the University had a CDIO, they were unclear what resources were available to this officer and they noted a perceived lack of coordination of DEIA activities around campus.

The Special Committee applauds the new office facilities in Steele Hall for the Office of the CDIO, and the migration of joint reporting lines to the CDIO for the ADA Coordinator, the Student Support Services Office and the New York State Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP). Building on this, the Special Committee urges that the CDIO function receive enough support from the University to ensure solid strategy, clearly articulated and defined output and outcomes, and metrics for reporting to the Board and the broader University community.

**A. Recommendation: Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer to submit a draft strategic plan by June 2021.<sup>18</sup>**

The campus activism of academic year 2019-20 and the expansion of the Office of the CDIO had that individual focused on immediate and tactical issues, and delayed important foundational work such as the campus pulse survey and the DEIA inventory until fall 2020.

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<sup>18</sup> The CDIO will submit the plan to the Special Committee or a successor Board committee, if approved by the Board.

With the information from these studies, the CDIO will build a draft strategic plan for DEIA by June 2021, with a goal of finalizing and publishing a strategic plan by November 2021.

Details of Special Committee recommendations can be found in [Appendix J](#).

**B. Recommendation: Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer to foster campus dialogue on national issues.**

As noted in the introduction to this report, many of the contemporary issues that enflame the passions of the campus community and lead to demonstrations and other forms of activism are part of a broader national reckoning with institutional racism and a new national culture that rejects bias incidents.

Insofar as it is possible and applicable, the Office of the CDIO will work with the Student Activism Engagement Team (SAET) and other stakeholders on campus, not just on the community's ongoing efforts at self-improvement, but also to focus national issues towards a national audience, and local issues toward University leadership and/or local authorities.

**8. *Campus Commitments: Ensure the University fully and effectively meets the Campus Commitments on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in a timely manner.***

As summarized below, there are several approved Campus Commitments as well as some additional demands from the Indigenous students and the #NotAgainSU activists in Crouse-Hinds Hall in spring 2020.

Of the original 35 Campus Commitments from the Barnes Center students, International students and Jewish students, 16 are complete, 14 are substantially complete and five are in progress. Status updates are solicited from Campus Commitment leads, updated on a monthly basis and communicated to the campus community by the CDIO via email and the University website: <https://www.syracuse.edu/life/accessibility-diversity/diversity-inclusion/commitments>. This summary table captures the progress of the Campus Commitments by originating student group:

Summary Table			
Group	Barnes Center Students, International Students, Jewish Students	#NotagainSU Students	Indigenous Students
Timeline	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020
Commitments/ Demands	35 Commitments (9 Expansions, 5 Addendums from Spring 2020)	17 New Demands	7 Commitments
* Implementation Status	20 Complete 12 Substantially Complete 3 In Progress	6 Complete 0 Substantially Complete 2 In Progress 9 No Commitment (no agreement)	7 In Progress

Significant progress on the Campus Commitments was made through the summer and early fall 2020 despite some initial COVID-19 delays in spring 2020. Campus Commitment leads successfully transitioned to virtual working and remote student engagement. The University continues to monitor potential impacts that COVID-19 may have on resource allocation, participation in initiatives and timelines. The Special Committee will continue to monitor progress and ensure accountability in the agreed-upon commitments.<sup>19</sup>

**9. *Department of Public Safety: Address the lack of trust in the Department of Public Safety.***

The Special Committee endorses the University’s decision to engage former U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch to review the Department of Public Safety’s conduct, policies and practices, consult with stakeholders, and make recommendations regarding best practices for campus policing and a Community Review Board.

The Special Committee received [the report](#) on Monday, February 22, 2021, when the report was released to the Syracuse University community and endorses the Chancellor’s decision to accept the report’s conclusions and recommendations. The Special Committee will work with appropriate Board committees to provide oversight of the implementation of that Report’s recommendations.

**10. *Board of Trustees: Provide for ongoing leadership and strategic oversight from the Board of Trustees in regards to the University’s diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility efforts.***

<sup>19</sup> A full list of the Campus Commitments and progress updates can be found at: <http://syracuse.edu/commitments>.

Since its inception in December 2019, the Special Committee has been regularly engaged with the Board, and the issues raised have been an important part of the Board's agenda over the last year. To ensure that the Board will remain engaged and attentive to these issues and, most importantly, to maintain strategic oversight of the University's work towards its vision of a diverse, inclusive and accessible campus, the Special Committee makes the following recommendations:

**A. Recommendation: Maintain an Advisory Committee on University Climate, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility to provide strategic oversight over the inclusiveness of the University's culture and its plans and progress toward meeting its diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility goals.**

The Advisory Committee on University Climate, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (Advisory Committee) will build on the work of the Special Committee that developed this report. The Special Committee was dedicated to discovery and developing recommendations on campus climate. The Advisory Committee will focus on ongoing oversight, in conjunction with all appropriate Board committees.

The Advisory Committee will provide strategic oversight, in conjunction with appropriate Board committees, to ensure that the University's policies and programming support the University's vision for DEIA and remain a critical component of its mission to create informed, global citizens; that the budget adequately supports these priorities; that faculty and staff personnel policies and procedures are equitable and aligned with achieving the University's DEIA goals; that the responsible administrative areas implement Campus Commitments; that the University is leveraging its existing DEIA assets, per the DEIA Inventory; and that programs are periodically evaluated for quality through the multiple lenses that represent the diversity of our broad community. Given the dynamic and evolving nature of the issues, the Special Committee presently recommends maintaining Board engagement through an Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee will report directly to the Executive Committee and will report to the full Board at least twice per year.

**B. Recommendation: Outreach.**

The Special Committee welcomes the Enrollment and the Student Experience Committee's expanded outreach to students, and encourages the Enrollment and the Student Experience Committee to work with appropriate staff to find other ways to expand Trustee engagement with students, faculty and other campus stakeholders.

**C. Recommendation: Continue to diversify the Board of Trustees.**

As part of its ongoing commitment to continue to diversify its voting membership, the Board adopts the below Diversity Statement:

*The Board of Trustees is committed to achieving a diverse, equitable, inclusive and respectful campus for the benefit of our students, faculty, staff, administration and community. As a part of this commitment, the Board aspires to have the diversity of its voting membership better reflect that of the Syracuse University student body.*