

# CenSUs

*Everyone Counts*

CREATING AN ANTI-RACIST COMMUNITY  
FINAL REPORT

Susquehanna  
UNIVERSITY

## CENSUS TASK FORCE: CREATING AN ANTI-RACIST COMMUNITY

In 2020, Susquehanna University President Jonathan Green issued a call to action for Susquehanna to step into its role as an actively anti-racist community. His charge led to the establishment of the *CenSUs: Everyone Counts* task force, which states that fundamental to the university's future is that all members of its community are safe, valued, and provided with opportunities to thrive and flourish.

The task force's work began with an examination of 14 documents that included surveys, an action plan produced by a consultant, reports from ad hoc committees, and individual observations. Taken as a whole, they pointed to five broad areas of concern, which turned into the five core subcommittees of the task force:

- » Student-Centered Education
- » Faculty and Staff Issues
- » Campus Safety and the Counseling Center
- » Website and Social Media
- » Institution

Led by Shari Jacobson, associate professor of anthropology, and Olu Onafowora, department head and professor of economics, the task force was comprised 13 students, 25 staff members, 17 members of the faculty, and one member of the Board of Trustees (See Appendix A).

## STUDENT-CENTERED EDUCATION

*This committee considered broadly the education of our students. Orientation, co-curricular programming, and residence hall life were examined. Accomplishments include:*

Ed Slavishak, professor of history, and the Black Student Union hosted *Infrequently Asked Questions*, a series of structured conversations that were engendered by viewing and discussing short videos produced by various faculty members. Videos covered discrete topics centered on diversity and inclusion, and each posed a question for further contemplation. Those videos can be viewed [here](#).

The **Achieve. Lead. Vote!** nonpartisan initiative engaged students in the democratic process by streamlining, demystifying, and educating them on ballot issues, and election and voting processes at all levels. To bolster these efforts, Susquehanna became a member of the Pennsylvania Student Voting Coalition, a nonpartisan, student and professional network representing various institutions of higher education across the state. PASVC members are focused on driving student voter education, registration, and turnout rates at their respective institutions. As a result of this work, Susquehanna was designated a Voter Friendly Campus by the Fair Elections Center's Campus Vote Project and NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

**MLK Week** offered a weeklong slate of events that brought together the campus and local community. **The Legacy of MLK - A Day of Teaching** offered four blocks of programming with lectures that covered a range of topics, from equitable distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine and the economic impact of the pandemic to antisemitism and voter suppression. The event modeled civil discourse by providing a space in which conflict or disagreement can emerge and be treated as opportunities to share authentically, listen actively, and engage respectfully.

Organized by the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, weekly *Let's Talk* lunches during the fall 2020 semester focused mainly on the 2020 presidential election, and included sessions such as *How To Mobilize Your Community*, *Where Your Vote Matters*, *Managing Anxiety Around Election Results*, and *Election Results Are In: Now What?*

To help students appreciate cultural differences within the United States versus their study-abroad destination, Global Opportunities program directors received special training to implement curriculum into their GO prep classes to educate students on the topic. As potential frontline responders, resident assistants also received diversity training from the Center for Diversity and Inclusion to handle bias incidents in residence halls.

## **FACULTY AND STAFF ISSUES**

*This subcommittee had a two-fold charge: first, to ensure faculty and staff are trained to work with a diverse student body whose understandings of diversity are fluid and may differ from faculty and staff understandings of diversity; second, to address questions of tenure, promotion, campus climate, and retention for faculty and staff of color and individuals in underrepresented groups. Accomplishments include:*

Mandatory annual anti-racism training is currently being explored with a curriculum starting in fall 2021.

Three resource guides – *Race Language Guide*, *Disability Language Guide*, *Gender and Sexuality Language Guide* – have been developed that constitute a Faculty and Staff Resource Library that will serve as a basic resource guide to address identity terminology and definitions, describe acronyms that focus on gender and racial identity, and suggest language for engaging in conversation about these topics. These guides are currently under review with the Center for Diversity and Inclusion. Plans are to make these guides easily accessible via Blackboard or a public-facing website.

A clear process for staff promotion and retention has largely been integrated into SU 2.0 and is ongoing. Plans are to conduct annual surveys of staff to learn what is going well with supervisors and what needs improvement. Human Resources will use feedback for annual internal trainings of supervisors.

The subcommittee examined data on faculty members who left Susquehanna both for cause and not-for-cause and found no evidence of disparities based on race in initial calculations.

## **CAMPUS SAFETY AND THE COUNSELING CENTER**

*This subcommittee was charged with ensuring that our campus and environs are safe for all students, staff, and faculty. They examined relations between and among students, staff, faculty, Campus Safety, and the broader Selinsgrove community. Accomplishments include:*

Campus Safety personnel participated in three, three-hour anti-bias training sessions with Maj. Kristal Turner-Childs, acting deputy commissioner of staff with the Pennsylvania State Police. Training covered the following topics: implicit and unconscious bias, anti-racism, inclusive practice, de-escalation, and cultural competence. Campus Safety employees also completed mental health training.

Campus Safety also produced a document detailing the department's mission, services, and recent and ongoing training initiatives.

**Security upgrades** were made to campus, with attention first paid to the lower part of University Avenue, where the Department of Facilities installed additional security cameras and new security window screens and upgraded door hardware. Security camera expansion is planned for the upper and lower sections of University Avenue.

In anticipation of increasing political tensions leading up to the 2020 presidential election, Campus Safety leadership developed a Safety and Security Operations Plan that called for enhanced foot patrols and heightened safety protocols in advance of and after the election, while employees volunteered to transport students to polling locations on Election Day, all of which allowed students to exercise their rights as citizens in a safe environment and protected the campus community from disruptive or illegal actions that could have threatened security.

To ensure students of all backgrounds feel safe on campus, Campus Safety has committed to providing security at events and demonstrations hosted by campus special interest groups. A peaceful assembly policy also was created and included in the [2020-21 student handbook](#).

## WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA

*This subcommittee was charged with ensuring Susquehanna's website and other digital communications make it easy to find information about diversity and campus safety; and promoting social media messaging that reflects Susquehanna's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Accomplishments include:*

A social media policy was drafted by the Office of Marketing and Communications and has been approved by the Office of Information Technology, and is with legal counsel for review. Guidelines within the policy apply to all types of affiliated social media on behalf of Susquehanna University. Guidelines include but are not limited to:

- » Strive for accuracy. Confirm facts, do your research, and share your sources before posting information on social media. Review your content, and correct errors promptly and transparently.
- » Accessibility for all. Use image descriptions and/or add the text from your image to your caption to assist screen readers. When applicable, add closed captioning to your video content.
- » Be respectful of views. We are committed to fostering a learning environment that allows for freedoms of speech and expression in accordance with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Please respect other people's views, beliefs and emotions, and their privacy.

The policy also includes best practices for employees to follow in the course of their personal social media dealings.

Additional web enhancements include the addition of links to the online bias incident reporting form that were added to the bottom navigation of the external SU website for easy access, the addition of a mySU link to encourage increased sharing of diversity related stories, and updated story and profile tagging on the university's website so that stories tagged with "diversity," "equity" and "inclusion" or "inclusive excellence" aggregate at the bottom of the Inclusive Excellence webpage.

The Office of Marketing and Communications also created the @happeningatsusky Instagram account and used main university social media platforms to share diversity-related events and activities. Student social media takeovers will begin in the fall 2021 semester.

An audit was conducted of photography, imagery, and video assets, with updated images added to the university website throughout the spring 2021 semester. This process will continue in perpetuity as an ongoing function of the Office of Marketing and Communications.

## INSTITUTION

*This subcommittee examined how the arrangement and use of spaces on our campus are rendered welcoming and supportive for different members of our community. Accomplishments include:*

Space was reallocated on the ground floor of the Charles B. Degenstein Campus Center to expand the Center for Diversity and Inclusion. Specific funding was dedicated for new furnishings and décor to create the DEN (Diversity Empowerment Nest), a place where students of color can comfortably gather. Additionally, the Division of Inclusive Excellence will relocate to the first floor of the Degenstein Campus Center in the former location of the Office of Event Management.

Sixteen bathrooms across campus have been identified as gender neutral. These bathrooms are identified with signs that simply say "Bathroom" in English and Spanish, with Braille included. The bathrooms are also identified on a campus map that can be found [here](#).

The Blough-Weis Library hosted two Human Library events during the 2020-21 academic year, one in collaboration with the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way. These events addressed people's inherent prejudices by helping them to talk to those they would not normally meet. The organization uses a library analogy of lending people and their stories rather than books.

University statements on ethical living and diversity and inclusion were reviewed and consolidated into one [Statement on Ethical and Inclusive Living](#) (See Appendix B), resulting in a living and evolving document and a roadmap that addresses how Susquehanna's values translate into action.

To recognize the history of the land Susquehanna occupies, the university developed a *Land Acknowledgement Statement* (See Appendix C) to be read at all major university events (including Opening Convocation and Commencement), as well as smaller events per the prerogative of the event organizer.

## **CONCLUSION**

While the individual action items of CenSUs are largely complete or nearing completion, living as an actively anti-racist community is an ongoing commitment.

Moving forward, the newly formed Inclusion, Diversity, Equity in Action (IDEA) Council will continue the work started by CenSUs. Led by the chief inclusion and diversity officer, the IDEA Council will address issues of inclusion and diversity at the university level and help carry out initiatives of the university's Strategic Plan. Membership includes faculty, staff from Global Programs, the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, and students.

As an institution of higher education, we must promote diversity and inclusion on our campus because they align with our mission. When Susquehanna commits itself to educating students for productive, creative and reflective lives of achievement, leadership and service in a diverse, dynamic and interdependent world, we take it upon ourselves to achieve this goal in an environment that ensures safety for all members of our community, whose differences we not only embrace, but also celebrate.

Sincere thanks are extended to Shari Jacobson and Olu Onafowora for their leadership of this effort, and to the many faculty and staff members, students and trustees who dedicated their time and talents to this important work.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Dixon', written in a cursive style.

**Michael Dixon,**  
*Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer*