

**PRESIDENT'S WORKING GROUP  
ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EDI)**



**Phase 1: Final Report and Recommendations**

*February 2021*

*A multiphase process that will lead to the creation and implementation of an EDI action plan at St. Jerome's University.*



## BACKGROUND

In April 2020, Dr. Scott Kline, Interim President and Vice Chancellor, launched the St. Jerome’s University Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Initiative, a multiphase process that will lead to the creation and implementation of an EDI action plan for St. Jerome’s University (SJU). This EDI Initiative is broad in its scope, attending to the many and various ways in which members of the St. Jerome’s community are excluded, marginalized, and disregarded.

This EDI Initiative is grounded in Commitment 5 of the SJU Strategic Plan entitled: “Our Culture,” which states: “We foster a respectful, inclusive community that is centered on the well-being of our students and the promotion of the common good.” The priorities within this commitment include: supporting a culture of encounter that focuses on integrative questioning from a variety of perspectives and traditions; creating a community of respect, honesty, empathy, and compassion that supports and embraces the whole person; encouraging spirited, respectful dialogue.

The EDI Initiative is also grounded in St. Jerome’s University’s identity and mission as a Catholic university which is committed to a set of principles, known as Catholic social teaching (CST), that guides responses to systemic social injustices. The foundational principle of CST affirms the inherent dignity of each and every human person which means that every human being is valuable and worthy of respect. Respecting the dignity of each and every person should result in all members of the St. Jerome’s community feeling included.

The President’s Working Group on EDI submits this report and recommendations with full acknowledgment that St. Jerome’s University has not, and does not, always foster a respectful and inclusive community, nor has it always treated each member of the SJU community as valuable and worthy of respect. At the same time, we are hopeful that the action plan that will be developed by the President’s Advisory Group in Phase 2 of the St. Jerome’s University EDI Initiative will help us to truly foster a community in which all of our students, staff, and faculty feel included, supported, and able to contribute fully to the life of the University.

*I have frequently called for the growth of a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and divisions....All this calls for the ability to recognize other people’s right to be themselves and to be different. This recognition, as it becomes a culture, makes possible the creation of a social covenant. Without it, subtle ways can be found to make others insignificant, irrelevant, of no value to society. While rejecting certain visible forms of violence, another more insidious kind of violence can take root: the violence of those who despise people who are different, especially when their demands in any way compromise their own particular interests.*





## WORKING GROUP ACTIONS

The President's Working Group on EDI was mandated to engage the SJU community in preparatory work required for the development of a comprehensive EDI action plan. Its work from July – December 2020 was focused on five areas within the University: 1) Hiring Systems and Practices; 2) Curriculum and Programs; 3) Outreach, Recruiting, and Marketing; 4) Facilities; 5) Campus Culture. Recommendations related to each of these areas are included below.

The President's Working Group on EDI was mandated to consult with and seek feedback from internal and external stakeholder groups. Our intention was to survey all stakeholder groups early in the fall term. Given the complexity of developing quality survey instruments, the Working Group did not have enough time to prepare, submit, and evaluate the data from these surveys. Consequently, we recommend that the President's Advisory Group proceed with surveying all stakeholder groups and use the data from the surveys to inform the development of the SJU EDI action plan.

The President's Working Group on EDI undertook an environmental scan of promising EDI practices in other universities. Given the results of that scan, we recommend that the Advisory Group examine the following as items to be included in the SJU action plan:

- integrate EDI and anti-racism into the next SJU strategic plan;
- create an easily accessible and robust EDI website;
- utilize relevant EDI practices implemented at Canadian universities that have strong EDI programs; and
- consider extending the name of the initiative to include Indigeneity (EDII) or Decolonization (EDID).





## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Hiring Systems and Practices

We recommend that the Advisory Group consider the following as initial steps in developing adequate policies and procedures regarding SJU hiring systems and practices:

- utilize EDI consulting firms to determine where to post job advertisements and how to recruit a diverse pool of applicants;
- require EDI and anti-racism training for all members of SJU hiring committees;
- determine appropriate ways to interview faculty candidates about how EDI will be addressed in the classroom and incorporated into course material.

### Curriculum and Programs

We recommend that the Advisory Group incorporate the following as starting points for a comprehensive review and renewal of SJU curriculum and programs:

- bring in EDI and Indigeneity / decolonizing experts who can help faculty think through how our courses can be taught, reimagined, and experienced by students through an EDI lens and how any new curriculum and programming can be conceived of and envisioned through an EDI and Indigeneity / decolonization lens;
- determine how best to foster EDI and Indigeneity / decolonization in all SJU experiential and service learning programs.

### Outreach, Recruiting, and Marketing

We recommend that the Advisory Group address the following as some of the important concerns related to SJU outreach, recruiting, and marketing:

- racialized and marginalized students at SJU need to have adequate and appropriate supports;
- a relevant outreach and recruitment plan should lead to a diverse student body and to SJU as a place where all students see themselves reflected;
- the way in which SJU speaks about its identity and mission as a Catholic university should ensure that all prospective students experience true hospitality and feel they are welcomed and belong.

### Facilities

We recommend that the Advisory Group explore the following as some principal matters related to SJU facilities:

- examine ways in which SJU can ensure that students, faculty, and staff experience all campus spaces as places where they are supported;
- investigate concrete ways in which we can honour the land on which we work, teach, and learn (e.g., artwork, the naming of buildings and spaces);
- ensure that our campus is fully accessible and continues to maintain AODA compliance;
- find a location on campus where students are able to use various art forms to represent themselves and the diversity of their experience and where SJU can revisualize our academic disciplines through an EDI lens.



### **Campus Culture**

We recommend that the Advisory Group consider the following as some critical aspects of SJU campus culture that need to be addressed:

- EDI and anti-racism training should become part of the orientation and ongoing professional development of SJU students, staff, and faculty;
- developing internal resources and external relationships in the KW community to ensure that all students, staff, and faculty have the supports they need;
- the need to develop appropriate policies and processes to deal with difficult EDI situations that arise in any aspect of the life of the University.

### **Structure of Advisory Group**

With regard to the composition of the President's Advisory Group on EDI whose main objective is the development of an SJU EDI action plan, the Working Group recommends that the following be considered:

- maintaining an adequate degree of continuity between the Working Group and the Advisory Group;
- there be three students on the Advisory Group;
- that staff representation on the Advisory Group reflect all aspects of the University and not just management, and have some EDI training or relevant knowledge;
- that full-time faculty and CAS representation on the Advisory Group have EDI training or relevant knowledge;
- that SJU utilize external persons who are members of BIPOC and other marginalized communities, and have the expertise to support and help to facilitate the work of the Advisory Group;
- that the Advisory Group function with a co-chair model, with at least one SJU senior administrator serving as one of the co-chairs.





## PRESIDENT'S WORKING GROUP

The President's Working Group wishes to thank St. Jerome's University for the opportunity to have served on this committee and to launch SJU's EDI initiative. It has been a privilege to work together on this preparatory phase that we trust has positioned SJU to develop a robust and meaningful EDI action plan.

Cristina Vanin, (Interim) Vice President Academic and Dean (co-chair)  
Mike Gourlay, Executive Director of Finance and Administration (co-chair)  
Veronica Austen, Associate Dean  
Michelle Watson, Director of Human Resources  
John Arnou, (Acting) Director, Student Affairs  
Martha Fauteux, Director, Campus Ministry  
Sue Brubacher, Director, Enrolment and Upper Year Transition  
Faculty members: Carm DeSantis, Denise Whitehead  
Student members: Eve Astolfi, Jenny Fu, Leslie Moss

*Refusing to engage in an authentic exploration of racial realities erases (and denies) alternate racial experiences. If we [members of a privileged racial group] block out other realities by not discussing them, we can pretend that they don't exist, thereby assuming a shared racial experience. Not talking about race allows us to maintain our sense of ourselves as unique individuals, outside collective socialization and group experience. While it isn't comfortable for most whites to talk about racism, we must do so if we want to challenge — rather than protect — racism.*

