



Update on the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism
November 2022

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Over the years, important work has been done by individuals committed to advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism at StFX University through research, curriculum, and service. The past year has precipitated an opportunity for deeper reflection on how we will continue to demonstrate this commitment. Systemic racism has been part of academia since its inception, and experiences of racism, discrimination and harassment have impacted many members of our community. In 2021, a series of Town Hall sessions and consultations with Black, Indigenous, and other racialized staff, students, and faculty shone a light on concerns that actioned immediate and swift steps towards eliminating racism in all areas at the University.

Community feedback provided the primary impetus for Dr. Andy Hakin's directive to establish the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR) to advise on action-oriented measures to address racism and in particular anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism on our campus. Acknowledging the wealth of existing reports and previous recommendations, PACAR aimed to go beyond identifying problems to offer a bold, solution-focused action plan. PACAR was an acknowledgement that StFX's record on anti-racism and inclusivity was less than commendable. It was a recognition that our University had to be better.

The PACAR Report symbolizes StFX University's recognition of systemic issues that have plagued our institution and the harm - caused to many. The report calls on us to ensure that this time is different. The PACAR Report identifies critical issues the University must address to create a safer campus culture that respects, values, and advances Mi'kmaw, Indigenous, Black and other minoritized members of our community. This work complements our ongoing efforts to address the concerns of other historically excluded groups on campus, including members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, international and first-generation communities, persons with disabilities and others who experience barriers to accessibility, and those at the intersections of these identities who have their own unique histories and experience additional barriers. We must listen to those who have been harmed and as an institution, do the work required to transform and build a culture of care, respect, kindness, dignity, and pride. That work which has been borne by our Mi'kmaw, Indigenous, Black and other racialized colleagues must be immediately joined by all in our community.

- The PACAR Report includes 45 recommendations identified under four broad environments: (1) Environments to Support Inclusive Teaching, Learning and Curricula; (2) Working and Organization Environment; (3) Living and Social Environment; and (4) Community Environment
- Our Accountability Framework will enable us to monitor our progress towards achieving the goals and initiatives outlined in the plan.
- We will leverage our integrated planning framework to enable collaborative work across the university and implement, monitor, and continually improve the initiatives outlined in the Report.
- We are committed to creating and working through a transparent process based on facilitation and accountability.



APPRECIATION

We thank the members of PACAR for their dedication in the development of the report. The members of PACAR engaged in difficult, and courageous conversations, and navigated the mental and physical toll these efforts put upon each member in confronting traumatic episodes of racism, anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism. This was not easy given their duties as members of faculty, staff, alumni, the student body and as representatives of the external community.

The demand and need for change on our campus is palpable. This is not new. As the PACAR Report reminds us, members of our university community have been fighting for inclusive learning, living, and working environments for a long time. Their resistance, activism, and advocacy have been instrumental and brought us to where we are today in our mobilization efforts. Many have graduated, retired, or simply moved on. Many are still here today. Their work will not be in vain.

ACTION

The PACAR Report is a call to action that we will heed. A sample of StFX ongoing efforts, many of which align well with the recommendations, include:

- Becoming one of 50 initial signatories to the Scarborough Charter on Black inclusion and advancement at Canadian postsecondary institutions.
- Development of a new Harassment and Discrimination Policy, approved in August 2021. The revised policy incorporates best practices for process, significantly compressing process timelines, and includes a definition of microaggressions.
- Created and deployed StFX's first in house employee census. Data provided from the census will hold our institution accountable to supporting the strategic direction of the university in ensuring inclusive hiring practices, expanding diversity on campus, and providing appropriate services and programming
- Established free culturally relevant, trauma-informed mental health supports and services to Black and Indigenous faculty, staff, and students. These services are provided by counsellors with lived experiences, who are themselves members of these communities. *
- Hired a Human Rights Education and Response Advocate (HRERA) to advocate for students, faculty, and staff experiencing racism and support them in navigating reporting channels. The HRERA also leads prevention and education with respect to harassment and discrimination.
- Assembled a First Year Experience Working Group to review and develop transitions programming, with a focus on developing and delivering tailored transitions programming to members of historically excluded groups at StFX.
- Established Community Connections Day, an early welcome and orientation program for Black, Indigenous and 2SLGBTQIA+ students
- Hired four Black and four Indigenous Peer Mentors to assist new students and create community.
- Developed and implemented You Belong @ X, a 60-minute self-directed online mandatory anti-racism student resource offered via Moodle. The module also identifies the Harassment and Discrimination Policy and related supports.



- Created a new Student Services [landing page](#) with clearer reporting and support pathways for students who have experienced harassment and discrimination.
- Implemented a communication campaign to support a welcoming and inclusive community that does not tolerate racism
- Developed and delivered a series of new equity modules for faculty and staff, including Anti-Indigenous Racism, Anti-Black Racism, and Anti-Oppression. *
- Hired a consultancy firm to develop an employment equity policy and provide tangible steps to hire and retain and promote historically excluded groups fairly and equitably.
- The University's Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) designed and offered three multi-day retreats during 2021 focused on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
- The VP Academic established four Faculty Chairs in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and seconded Dr. Jane MacMillan as Special Advisor for Indigenous Research and Learning Partnerships. *

*made possible by the generous support of CRC funding

These institutional initiatives are in addition to other actions underway through academic and service units across the campus that demonstrate our commitment to transformative change, including the Library, the StFX Art Gallery, and the efforts of numerous individual faculty and staff members. We are proud of the strides being made but know there is a tremendous amount of work still left to do to create an equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible campus. The implementation of the PACAR Report is critical to that work. Three initiatives currently underway include:

- Finalize and share the PACAR Report, Recommendations and Accountability Framework with the relevant bodies.
- Review PACAR membership and Terms of Reference to help continue to inform and guide the implementation of the goals and initiatives.
- Continue to collaborate with campus partners to integrate the initiatives into relevant operational plans. Identify and acquire resources to fund these programs, services, and initiatives, where necessary.

ACCOUNTABILITY

It is important that we provide regular reports on our progress as well as clear information about initiatives as they evolve. This will include:

- The provision of the full PACAR Report and Accountability Framework for public review and posted on the PACAR website
- Regular updates to the Executive Leadership Team
- Annual reports to Senate and the Board of Governors
- Ensuring alignment of the PACAR recommendations and other strategic planning efforts at StFX University, including but not limited to, policies, practices and initiatives related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.



- Develop a common monitoring tool and evaluation framework to regularly assess and report on progress towards meeting the commitments outlined in this Plan.

Frequent reporting (e.g., on a quarterly or biannual basis) is proposed at the onset of the implementation to identify and address any critical issues or barriers that could impede the implementation of the recommendations and the success of the overall initiative. As the initiative progresses, annual reports may suffice. These reports and updates will be provided and discussed at the University's governing tables (e.g., Board of Governors, Senate, Executive Council), with the intention of reviewing progress, mitigating identified risks, and celebrating successes.

The PACAR Report includes a proposed Accountability Framework and a dedicated section outlining our progress on the initiatives. The goal is to address initiatives concurrently, acknowledging that implementation time may vary based on the breadth and depth required to make the substantive changes that are required. The Accountability Framework will also identify units/departments responsible for their achievement of specific initiatives to facilitate appropriate planning, action, and resourcing.

This is a moment of recommitment for StFX University. We must turn it into a sustainable movement to foster a more equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible campus culture. Racism is not the business of just those who experience it. We must all hold ourselves accountable. It will take the collective effort of our campus community to create the change we all deserve. Our actions must move beyond a performative approach. Transformational, systemic and sustainable change is the goal. We encourage you to reach out to PACAR@stfx.ca if you have any comments, questions, or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Upshaw and Elizabeth Yeo
PACAR Co-Chairs