PACAR Consultation Overview
Summary Report

Introduction

In March 2022, the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR) released the *Priority Action Recommendations for Anti-Racism Work at St. Francis Xavier University* for further consultation. Two virtual Community Consultation sessions were held on March 5 and 11, 2022 to seek input from faculty, staff, students, senior leaders, and community members. During these sessions, 62 draft recommendations were presented for discussion. Participants were also able to provide further feedback and highlight any gaps that should be considered. Additionally, Senate hosted the Senate Forum on PACAR on March 29, 2022.

The aim of the sessions was to increase participation in the planning process, collect feedback on the draft recommendations to support further planning and action, and build and/or strengthen relationships with campus stakeholders and community members to support implementation of the recommendations.

This document provides a summary of the feedback received as the foundation for a more detailed roadmap that will outline actionable steps in the short, medium, and long-term. Our actions will continue to be informed by consultations that will carry on throughout the development and implementation of an anti-racism strategy for StFX University.

Voices Heard

In total, the Community Consultation sessions attracted 128 participants. This included 35 students, 36 faculty, 25 staff members, 25 senior leaders, and 7 community members, resulting in feedback and suggestions from across the University.

Working in small groups rooms, participants offered feedback on the draft recommendations related to four PACAR environments: (1) Environments to Support Inclusive Teaching, Learning and Curricula; (2) Working and Organization Environment; (3) Living and Social Environment; and (4) Community Environment. Participants were asked whether they agreed with the proposed draft recommendations or had any concerns, and if so, what they thought was missing. Anonymized notes were recorded by each facilitator and shared with the organizers. The feedback was organized into the thematic categories and submitted to the PACAR Co-Chairs.

The Senate Forum on PACAR was an abbreviated session that engaged an additional 30 members of faculty in the consultations. The Senate Forum followed a similar format as described above with a focus on opportunity for general input and a deeper discussion on one of the four PACAR environments.

It is important to acknowledge the many and significant contributions made by those who courageously stepped forward, engaged in dialogue, and assisted in facilitating the Community Consultation sessions. At the same time, we wonder about the stories we did not hear – but know are out there. In that spirit, this report attempts to honour and amplify the collective voice of the students, faculty, staff, senior leaders, and community members who shared their feedback with us, with an emphasis that it be accepted as the next step in an ongoing process of developing and implementing the recommendations that must continue.

Themes: What We Heard, What We Learned

This section of the report outlines major themes PACAR members identified through an analysis of the feedback collected. While the themes that follow are not entirely comprehensive of all that was voiced during the consultations, they do highlight where the feedback provided by participants converged among the group as a whole.

(1) Focus and Scope

While many participants expressed broad support, there were also comments which questioned the vagueness of some recommendations – either suggesting more specific groups which should be identified as priority, or highlighting other groups perceived to be left out of the conversation. This included experiences of anti-Asian racism, antisemitism, and islamophobia on-campus. There was a desire to address broader themes of equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and the work of decolonization in relation to Truth and Reconciliation within a broad context of social justice while others cautioned about attempting to do too much.

Participants indicated that StFX is making efforts to address the complexities of gender and sexual diversity, international, and persons with disabilities but doing so mostly separately and without addressing how these issues intersect with anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism. Similarly, work on race and racism needs to consider how identities also include sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, class, immigration status, religion, and ability. There is a need, therefore, for the recommendations to address racial inequities while simultaneously prioritizing an appreciation of intersectionality and the entire human experience.

> *"The document is putting together many experiences and trying to group them as one... So, it's almost getting at nothing at the same time as hitting so much. Maybe cut down the number of suggestions but specify each group that we're looking at...In grouping together often there's voices that get lost"* (Student).

(2) Vision and Aspirations

Participants emphasized the need to articulate a clear statement of commitment, rooted in anti-racism and social justice, to ground our ongoing efforts. Participants asked how these recommendations recognize and support the equity efforts already taking place at StFX and highlighted the strategic planning initiatives underway. Looking ahead, participants emphasized

the importance of integrating anti-racism into campus-wide planning efforts – one demonstrated through appropriate supports and services and pursued on a continuous and consistent basis. The aspiration must reflect how reaching our goals of anti-racism and inclusive excellence will ultimately make StFX a stronger institution.

> *"This needs to be about how this will make our university stronger. We need to say what our vision is and what the safe environment looks like, so we all feel good about what we are aspiring to do. That is really missing for me" (Staff).*

> *"Inclusive excellence embodies the recognition that not only is postsecondary education enriched by equity, diversity, and inclusion but equitable inclusion is critical to excellence" (Faculty).*

(3) Resourcing and Supports

As participants noted, addressing systemic racism is complex and multifaceted endeavor, and it is important to keep in mind that the recommendations are interrelated rather than separate. Participants felt that to be successful, this work needs to be appropriately resourced, and the people doing it need to be supported. With revisions to the document, PACAR could consider identifying the resource requirements; indicating where existing resources would be used, and where additional resources would be required.

> *"All of these seem like reasonable recommendations that we need to implement at our university. For me, the bigger challenge is going to be creating the financial resources to move ahead on these issues" (Senior Leader)*

(4) Accountability and Implementation

The need for action and accountability was identified early on in these consultations. To be successful, clear priorities, objectives, and timelines must be established, and participants cautioned that this was not coming across in the draft recommendations. The need to clarify how will that information will be analyzed, interpreted, actioned, and archived, and to integrate these as recommendations, was also mentioned. We must track, measure, and report on the outcomes and progress and do so in a manner that is transparent, sharing both our successes and challenges. This approach allows us to move forward with the urgent action that is needed while at the same time appreciating that changes may be required as circumstances change.

> *"What will be done with the information collected using the audit tool? How will that information be analyzed, interpreted, actioned, and archived? This may be good to include it even at recommendations because it would have resource implications, and potentially require specific infrastructure and HR support" (Faculty).*

(5) Commitment and Leadership

One of the most important requirements for successful anti-racism work is bold and courageous leadership, a notion that was articulated repeatedly over the two Community Consultation sessions. We heard many positive and hopeful comments about the importance and promise of the PACAR initiative, as well the recommendation for a Senior Leader (EDI). However, while many community members voiced hope and cautious optimism about the potential outcomes of PACAR's work, others were skeptical about whether the initiative would ultimately lead to any tangible results or lasting impact.

> *"I would like to talk about the timeline. I appreciate what they're trying to do but it's almost like we want to pat ourselves on the back because we've done all these things in the past. But here we are still in the same mess and there's still nothing different…All of these things make it seem like there's no racism when the same traumatic incidents continue to happen" (Student).*

Participants described the experience of being at this institution for many years and hearing these issues raised without seeing any meaningful change. Others described the many complexities and conflicting realities that exist within anti-racism work and asked the University to be transparent about these challenges. In this vein, participants asked the University to ensure that the implementation process is transparent and iterative, where it can systematically and routinely re-evaluate what it is doing and whether that is moving the University in the right direction.

> *"It is about the accessibility of the information and how students can understand what this committee is doing. I'd like to see that students understand what the progress is." (Student)*

(6) Policies and Processes

While it is evident that different people experience and are impacted by racism in different ways, PACAR heard from students that there is a lack of clarity about university policies and complaint processes regarding racism. The psychological harm of such incidents can be significant.

> *"For example, the Zoom call situation, it would be good to hear about what has happened, if anything is being done about it, as opposed to just getting one initial email. I think that would add to the transparency" (Student).*

Students (and precariously employed faculty and staff) are often afraid to speak out about racism – whether experienced or observed, explicit or implicit – for fear of what they may lose, and fear of being typecast. For example, the power imbalance between students and professors is a significant barrier to publicly calling out racial microaggressions, especially when they occur the classroom. PACAR heard time and again that more education and training are needed to raise awareness of all members of the campus community – students, faculty, staff, and senior

leaders – about what racism is and the many subtle forms racial microaggressions take, and that this training should take place on a more systematic, campus-wide level.

> *"One thing that I figured that is highly missing in the recommendations is microaggressions. That is something I think should be addressed" (Student).*

(7) Additional Feedback

Additional feedback from the sessions include:

- Ensure that experiences and storytelling are incorporated into our anti-racism work.
- Reconsider the philosophical positioning of the document to be more focused on creating a culture of belonging and renewal fostered by empathy, kindness, compassion, and lack of judgement.
- Develop additional recommendations focused on research as a key feature of our academic culture. This must include decolonizing research practices.
- Address the vagueness in some recommendations by providing greater clarity and more detail. For example, specify the type of training required (understanding power/privilege, intersectionality, racial microaggressions, how to have difficult conversations, how to intervene and respond to incidents of racism, how to navigate and manage the discomfort of change, etc.), how the training will be introduced, and what accountability measures will be in place.
- Strengthen the language of the recommendations to convey the urgency of this work.
- Remove duplication of recommendations and ensure accessibility for all audiences.
- Present a timeline of the history of anti-racism work at StFX, including not only the actions that were taken, but the harmful circumstances which necessitated the action.
- Engage faculty, staff, students, and community members in ongoing collaborative decision-making processes relating to ongoing development and implementation.

Charting Our Path Forward

PACAR heard many thoughtful suggestions for strengthening the recommendations, and ideas for making our campus a safer, more respectful, more inclusive place to be. Some suggestions were practical with potential for implementation in the shorter term. Other ideas were more complex and aspirational that will require a sustained, longer-term effort and significant commitment of resources.

The discussions provided an opportunity to build understanding together and helped to identify pathways for the journey ahead. In addition, the rich discussions led to the kind of collaborative planning required to create sustainable change and contributed to our cross-campus efforts to establish ongoing and collective commitment to the work. Together, participants modeled alternative ways and generated supportive action in real time.

In framing our recommendations, PACAR will consider what we heard during the Community Consultation sessions and will share with the campus community a revised version of the *Priority Action Recommendations for Anti-Racism Work at St. Francis Xavier University,* furthering the university's commitment to taking steps to remove barriers and advance anti-racism.