

Dear Siena Community,

In the summer of 2020, our administration identified several areas of focus necessary to advance racial justice on the Siena campus. Shortly thereafter, we embarked on a comprehensive campaign, originally comprised of eight priority areas, though we expanded the scope last year to include three additional action items. Transformational change takes time, but it demands persistence and accountability. Recently, we called together the President's Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion (PACDI) and received updates on all fronts. For your review, I'm providing a snapshot of the progress made and the work that is in development in all 11 areas.

### **Student Recruitment**

Among the first priorities of this campaign to be realized, this year's freshman class (Class of 2025) is the most diverse in the College's history. Building on that momentum remains a very high priority as we get ready to welcome the Class of 2026. Early results on this score are encouraging. Recently, Fr. Greg Gebbia traveled to New York City and personally chaperoned a campus visit for four students who identify as diverse and who would not have otherwise been able to tour Siena. The Enrollment team continues to explore new ways to attract students from previously under recruited, highly diverse markets to Siena.

### **Faculty and Staff Recruitment**

A faculty task force examined successful programs at other institutions and made several recommendations that touch on all points of the recruitment process, including the way job postings are written and the structure of the interview process. A faculty hiring coordinator will further develop the plans proposed by the task force and draft a diversity hiring guidebook. On the staff side, the College has engaged with an outside partner to develop future strategies for diversity recruitment and retention.

### **Education and Training**

The faculty developed a task force to broadly examine diversity education needs, and the findings – which included input from students – were presented to the provost at the end of the fall semester. A faculty development coordinator will spearhead next steps which include overseeing an advisory committee to assist with education programming development and implementation. The Council of Administrators will host its next diversity education workshop for staff and administrators early in the fall semester. COA is also exploring ways to engage employees who have not participated in previous *staff days of practice*.

### **Criminal Justice Major**

Supporting this campaign, a new major has been developed. Its title is *Criminal Justice Studies* and that proposal has been submitted to the New York State Education Department. We will begin to offer the program as soon as the new major is granted state approval.

### **Curriculum Reform**

Also supporting this campaign, six grants were awarded to departments for initiatives to diversify curriculum or pedagogical practices. Most departments began implementation this year. The action list is long and diverse, but to share just a few examples: philosophy has sponsored a speaker series,

psychology has hired a student as a diversity liaison to work with diverse students and prospective students, and social work has enlisted student advocates to go into community colleges and high schools to increase the number of diverse applicants in the program.

### **Damietta Cross-Cultural Center**

The Damietta Center, often in collaboration with Siena's affinity groups, has hosted many successful cross-cultural events this spring, with more planned for the end of the semester. The programming has included: Beyond the Binary, Joy of Samba Workshop, Expoze: Multicultural Talent Show, and much more. Full funding was restored to the Damietta Center two years ago, and under Br. George Camacho's leadership, the Center has been a beacon of multi-cultural celebrations on campus.

### **Campus Programming**

The Chief Diversity Officer at Goldman Sachs, Megan Hogan, will speak on campus on May 2 as part of the College's Lewis Golub Executive Lecture Series. Recently, the Spirit of '68 in partnership with the Thea Bowman Center for Women hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Capital District Feminist Studies Consortium Conference. The Spirit of '68 is also planning a program for this fall focused on the teaching of race.

### **Recognition**

On May 3 at 7:00 p.m. in the UHY Center, Martin Luther King III will provide the keynote address for the 35<sup>th</sup> annual Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King Lecture series on Race and Nonviolent Social Change. The event is open to the community and all are welcome to [REGISTER](#). On May 3, Mr. King will also receive an honorary degree from the College. Additionally, a new *Strengthening the Bonds of Racial Justice* permanent installation will appear in a Siena Hall second floor alcove (opposite the President's Office) this month.

### **Student Experience**

Using data from the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and anecdotal information gleaned from a student focus group, it's evident that students who identify as diverse experience Siena differently than students who identify as white. The Strategic Enrollment Management committee is taking the lead on this important issue. Action items to address this challenge have been included and prioritized in the nearly completed strategic plan.

### **Student Retention**

Members of a recently reconfigured student retention committee participated, virtually, in a series of intensive workshops presented by the Equity in Retention Academy. With the information and ideas gained through the academy, the committee will develop an action plan this summer.

### **Supporting Our Vision**

The College's director of foundations is pursuing funding that would support a class in the sociology department and provide greater opportunities for LGBTQA+ programming and initiatives.

We've set ambitious goals, but it takes ambition and resolve to make the world – and our community – a better place for everyone. In a short period of time, we've already made a difference that can be felt on

campus. That's not a reason to slow down; it's motivation to double down our efforts. Together, we will continue to build a more inclusive community and improve the student experience for all Saints.