

## **Initial Report and Recommendations Task Force for Racial Equality**

Submitted by Jonathan Gayles, Task Force Chair

In response to international reckoning related to police violence against Black people as well as broader considerations of the continuing impact of white supremacy and institutionalized racism, the leadership of Georgia State University took the important and laudable step of creating the Task Force for Racial Equality. Provost Wendy Hensel issued the following charge to the Task Force:

The Task Force is charged with providing advice to the Provost as follows:

1. Identifying ways in which Georgia State University, using our curriculum, teaching, research, community outreach and global activities, can address and reduce systemic racism and police violence against Black people and other underrepresented groups at the University and in society.
2. Identifying important conversations for GSU's campus community to increase understanding and awareness of issues of police violence and racial discrimination against Black people and other underrepresented groups.
3. Identifying ways in which Georgia State may best support our Black and other underrepresented students, faculty, staff and community.

The original members of the Task Force were:

- Curtis Byrd, Special Adviser to the Provost
- Gwendolyn Benson, Associate Dean for School, Community and International Partnerships, College of Education & Human Development
- Cynthia Lester, Associate Dean of the Clarkston Campus and the Division of Math, Computer Science & Engineering, Perimeter College
- Rodney Lyn, Interim Dean of the School of Public Health
- Elizabeth Beck, Professor of Social Work, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies
- Jennifer Esposito, Chair of the Department of Educational Policy Studies, College of Education & Human Development
- Jennie Ward-Robinson, Special Assistant to the Dean, College of Arts & Sciences (Center for African Diaspora)
- Joe Spillane, Chief of the Police Department
- Donna Frazier, Chair of Staff Council
- Linda Nelson, Associate Vice President for Human Resources and Opportunity Development
- Allison Calhoun-Brown, Vice President for Student Engagement and Programs
- Kaelen Thomas, President of the Student Government Association
- Jessica Siemer, former President of the Graduate Alliance
- Natsu Saito, Distinguished University Professor of Law, College of Law

After determining the original membership of the Task Force, Provost Hensel invited Jonathan Gayles to Chair the Task Force. At his request, he invited three additional members to the Task Force. Two accepted:

- Collins Airhihenbuwa, Professor of Health Management and Policy, School of Public Health
- Elizabeth West, Professor of African-American Studies and English, College of Arts & Sciences

Nicolle Parsons-Pollard, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, joined the Task Force in early July. She currently serves as chair of the Faculty Affairs Subcommittee.

The Task Force completed an initial anonymous SWOT analysis and a brief survey to identify a set of priorities (Appendix A). Using the results of the survey and in consideration of the expertise of individual task force members, Byrd and Gayles organized five subcommittees (Appendix B). The Task Force convened five times, and subcommittees generally met during the weeks in which the Task Force did not. Agendas and meeting minutes are available in the Task Force Team site.

The following recommendations reflect our deliberations that began with our first meeting on June 8, 2020. These recommendations are the work of the five subcommittees and were unanimously supported by task force members.

- Administrative and Staff Affairs
- Community and Programming
- Institutional Change
- Faculty Affairs
- Student Affairs

We view these recommendations as an early step in a series of actions that, when taken together, will position GSU as a national leader and exemplary institution of higher education in its actions and courageous leveraging of this moment to protect and affirm the lives of Black and other marginalized people at the university, the community, the state, the nation and the world. For each recommendation, “strategic alignments” are identified. These alignments represent the connections between our recommendations, the provost’s charge as well as connections to the following strategic university efforts:

- The University Strategic Plan
- The Presidential Commission for Next Generation Faculty
- The Implementation and Steering Committee

We acknowledge that some of our recommendations may overlap with existing university efforts. Where this is the case, our recommendations indicate that these efforts should be redoubled and, when necessary, made more apparent to the university community.

We look forward to discussing these recommendations with the Provost in our continuing efforts to serve GSU. As the Fall term approaches The Task Force will continue to meet and

expects to submit its final report and recommendations to the Provost by the end of the Fall term (Appendix C).

## Administrative and Staff Affairs

## Strategic Alignments

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**Draft an initial GSU Police Action Plan that will review and propose policies, practices and accountability measures that will protect Black and other marginalized groups from undue police action.**

- **Task Force Charge 2:** Identifying important conversations for GSU's campus community to increase understanding and awareness of issues of police violence and racial discrimination against Black people and other underrepresented groups.
- **Task Force Charge 3:** Identifying ways in which Georgia State may best support our Black and other underrepresented students, faculty, staff and community.
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3:** Become a leading public research university addressing the most challenging issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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**Create a GSU Police Advisory/Accountability Board composed of staff, faculty, students and community representatives.**

- **Task Force charge 2 and 3**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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**Create a HR/AAEO Action Plan that will review and propose institutional policies around training, equity and inclusion across the entire HR/AAEO domain to include mandatory bi-annual racial bias training and reviewing staff compensation as a way of addressing concrete racial disparities.**

- **Task Force charge 3**
- **ISC immediate action 3:** Examination of hiring and onboarding practices starting with the university Affirmative Action Plan, and moving to education and training of all search committees within the colleges that meets university expectations and standards
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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**Develop inclusive hiring, promotion and retention practices that support racial diversity among senior staff, faculty and administrative leadership.**

- **Task Force charge 3**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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**Ensure racially diverse perspectives in decision-making among senior leadership.**

- **Task Force charge 3**
  - **Strategic Plan Goal 3**
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## Communications and Programming

## Strategic Alignments

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Building on a more complete narrative of the history of Georgia State University developed through CSAD's truth and transformation work, President Becker and senior leadership, in collaboration with CSAD and an ad hoc committee of the Task Force, hosts a series of town halls within and external to the GSU community. These town halls will critically consider and examine GSU's historical record in its relationship with African Americans and the African-American community. The takeaway from these townhalls should be exploring a way forward for the university to work in the community to become a collaborator and partner in building pathways for all to thrive.

- **Task Force charge 1: Identifying** ways in which Georgia State University, using our curriculum, teaching, research, community outreach and global activities, can address and reduce systemic racism and police violence against Black people and other underrepresented groups at the University and in society.
- **Task Force charge 2**
- **Transformative Recommendation 2:** *Invest resources into deepening the sense of community and engagement for all faculty, and celebrate the diversity of Georgia State's people, programs, and campus cultures.*
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 4:** *Be a leader in understanding the complex challenges of cities and developing effective solutions.*

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GSU will work with CSAD in its year of activities related to truth and transformation in the academy. This should include 1) providing resources for faculty to pull from existing documents to further investigate, document and archive GSU's history of engagement with African American communities; and 2) seek consultation from individuals who have worked in the area of truth and reconciliation and truth and transformation.

- **Task Force charge 1, 2 and 3**
- **Transformative Recommendation 3:** *Create a Center for African-American and African Diaspora Scholarship and Outreach, a research and resource center for intellectual community across the university and in collaboration with Atlanta partners.*
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Develop an Office of Community and Campus Relations to support the needs of and collaboration with the community .

- **Task Force charge 1**
  - **Strategic Plan Goal 3**
  - **Strategic Goal 4**
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## Faculty Affairs

## Strategic Alignments

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**Institutionalize the commitment to hire more Black faculty.**

- **Task Force charge 3**
- **ISC immediate action 3**
- **Transformative Recommendation 1:** *Make faculty diversity and engagement a visible priority coming from the President and senior leadership, and infuse this commitment throughout the university with urgency to act and the resources to support it.*
- **Transformative Recommendation 4:** *Implement new strategies for recruiting individuals from underrepresented minority groups to Georgia State faculty positions.*
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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**Review the use of Student Evaluations of Instruction due to inherent bias documented in the use of such instruments.**

- **Task Force charge 3**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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**Implement a racial impact statement process to ensure that policymakers are aware of any unintended consequences of a policy before implementation so that that impacts can be mitigated.**

- **Task Force charge 3**
  - **Transformative Recommendation 1**
  - **Strategic Plan Goal 3**
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## Institutional Change

## Strategic Alignments

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DEI as Strategic Planning Priority: Ensure inclusion of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion as an area of focus within the strategic planning process being launched in AY2020-2021. This process should be informed by input/surveys from faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders

- **Task Force charge 1 and 3**
- **Transformative Recommendation 1**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Racial Equity/Implicit Bias Training: Institute a campus-wide racial equity/implicit bias training that is required or highly encouraged, with leadership from President Becker and Provost Hensel. And mandate that all faculty on search committees must complete the training – *Inclusive Searches* and that university leaders (chairs and up) should be required to complete *Leadership and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workshops*.

- **Task Force charge 3**
- **Faculty Recruitment Recommendation 5:** We recommend developing university-wide Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on best practices for faculty recruitment activities.
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Establish a process/system to track and report on faculty and administrative leadership searches, gathering data on applicant pool, individuals discussed, invited for phone/online screening, those interviewed, and hired.

- **Task Force 3**
- **ISC immediate action 4:** Creation of comprehensive data collection and tracking of the hiring, retention, and climate for URG faculty members
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Initiate a review of financial holdings and investments by the university (including its Foundation) from a racial justice, equity, and inclusion perspective and develop an action plan for divestment from entities, sectors, and corporations that produce products or support practices, structures, and systems that negatively impact communities of color and other marginalized populations.

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- **Task Force charge 1**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

## Student Affairs

## Strategic Alignments

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Conduct Student Campus Climate Survey in Fall 2020

- **Task Force charge 1 and 2**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Add Diversity Module to Freshmen Orientation Course

- **Task Force charge 1**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Increase equity by developing a process outside of the academic department to support graduate students who are mistreated because of racism, discrimination, or problematic academic oversight. This process would include trained and compensated Graduate Student or Faculty Advocate who would assist students in articulating the issues and navigating the process.

- **Task Force charge 3**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Issue public statement affirming Chancellor's Initiative on renaming buildings honoring segregationists

- **Task Force charge 1**
- **Transformative Recommendation 1**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Provide a public statement of support for continuation of USGs test optional admissions policy

- **Task Force charge 1**
- **Transformative Recommendation 1**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Develop a diversity training for faculty, teaching assistants and staff on creating inclusive learning and working environments

- **Task Force charge 3**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Host Social Justice Speakers series with national presenters on topics of diversity, equity and inclusion

- **Task Force charge 1**
- **Strategic Plan Goal 3**

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Create social justice programming and pathways for co-curricular transcripts

- **Task Force charge 1**
  - **Strategic Plan Goal 3**
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Appendix A

Expanded

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p><b>Alumni</b>  <b>Demographics</b>                      -Diversity of student body                      -Faculty                      -"Black excellence in ATL"  <b>Charge</b>  <b>Community Involvement</b>  <b>Location</b>                      -Civil Right Legacy                      -Local institutions  <b>Independence</b>  <b>Faculty Perimeter College Team</b></p>	<p><b>Community Involvement</b>                      -Reputation                      -Office?  <b>Curriculum Discussions</b>  <b>Institutional Culture</b>                      -Faculty Diversity                      -Beyond Support                      -"BIPOC tax"                      -Beyond "inclusion"                      -Aversion to discomfort                      -Hierarchies                      -White apathy                      -Beyond police brutality                      -silos/disconnection w/reality                      -Ineffective faculty senate                      -brand over experience  <b>Policing</b>                      -Historical Context  <b>Trust</b>                      -Allegiance to status quo  <b>Underrepresentation</b>                      -Faculty  <b>Leadership</b>  <b>Student research</b>  <b>Whiteness<sup>1</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Community Involvement</b>                      -Office of Comm Affairs?                      -Initiatives  <b>Demographics Discussions</b>                      -Forum                      -Student orientation                      -Faculty alliances  <b>Faculty Implementation Committee</b>  <b>Institutional Culture Leadership</b>  <b>Location</b>                      -Abrams and Lance-Bottoms  <b>Moment</b>                      -Inflection point                      -Motivation for elected off's  <b>Team Training QEP</b></p>	<p><b>COVID-19 Budget</b>  <b>Institutional Culture</b>                      -Hierarchy/Silos                      - Lack of historical awareness                      - Racism  <b>Location</b>                      -Atlanta is in Georgia  <b>Moment</b>                      -Loss of momentum  <b>Politics</b>                      -Resistance of elected off's  <b>Perimeter College Practice</b>  <b>Team</b>                      -Transparency                      -Communication  <b>Trust</b>                      -Tension around consensus                      -Students                      -Community                      -Faculty and faculty of color</p>

<sup>1</sup> "The initial SWOT analysis was anonymous. It was designed to identify existing institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as the Task Force began its work. In a SWOT Analysis, "weaknesses" are those items that could prevent the successful implementation of the Task Force recommendations. In response to questions about the submission of the term "whiteness" under the "weakness" category, we presume this refers not to people who identify as white but rather to a social construction that reinforces systemic racism and existing racial hierarchies."

Condensed

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<b>Alumni Demographics Charge Community Involvement Location Independence Faculty Perimeter College Team</b>	<b>Community Involvement Curriculum Discussions Institutional Culture Policing Trust Underrepresentation Leadership Student research Whiteness<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Community Involvement Demographics Discussions Faculty Implementation Committee Institutional Culture Leadership Location Moment Team Training</b>	<b>COVID-19 Budget Institutional Culture Location Moment Politics PC Practice Team Trust</b>

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<sup>2</sup> See above explanation for the use of this term.

## Appendix B

### **Task Force Members (Subcommittees)**

- Chair, Jonathan Gayles, Chair and Professor of African American Studies, College of Arts & Sciences **(Ex Officio)**
- Curtis Byrd, Special Adviser to the Provost **(Ex Officio)**

### **Institutional Change**

- Cynthia Lester, Associate Dean of the Clarkston Campus and the Division of Math, Computer Science & Engineering, Perimeter College
- Gwendolyn Benson, Associate Dean for School, Community and International Partnerships, College of Education & Human Development
- Rodney Lyn, Interim Dean of the School of Public Health

### **Communications & Programming**

- Elizabeth Beck, Professor of Social Work, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies
- Elizabeth West, Professor of African-American Studies and English, College of Arts & Sciences
- Jennie Ward-Robinson, Special Assistant to the Dean, College of Arts & Sciences (Center for African Diaspora)

### **Student Affairs**

- Jennifer Esposito, Chair of the Department of Educational Policy Studies, College of Education & Human Development
- Allison Calhoun-Brown, Vice President for Student Engagement and Programs
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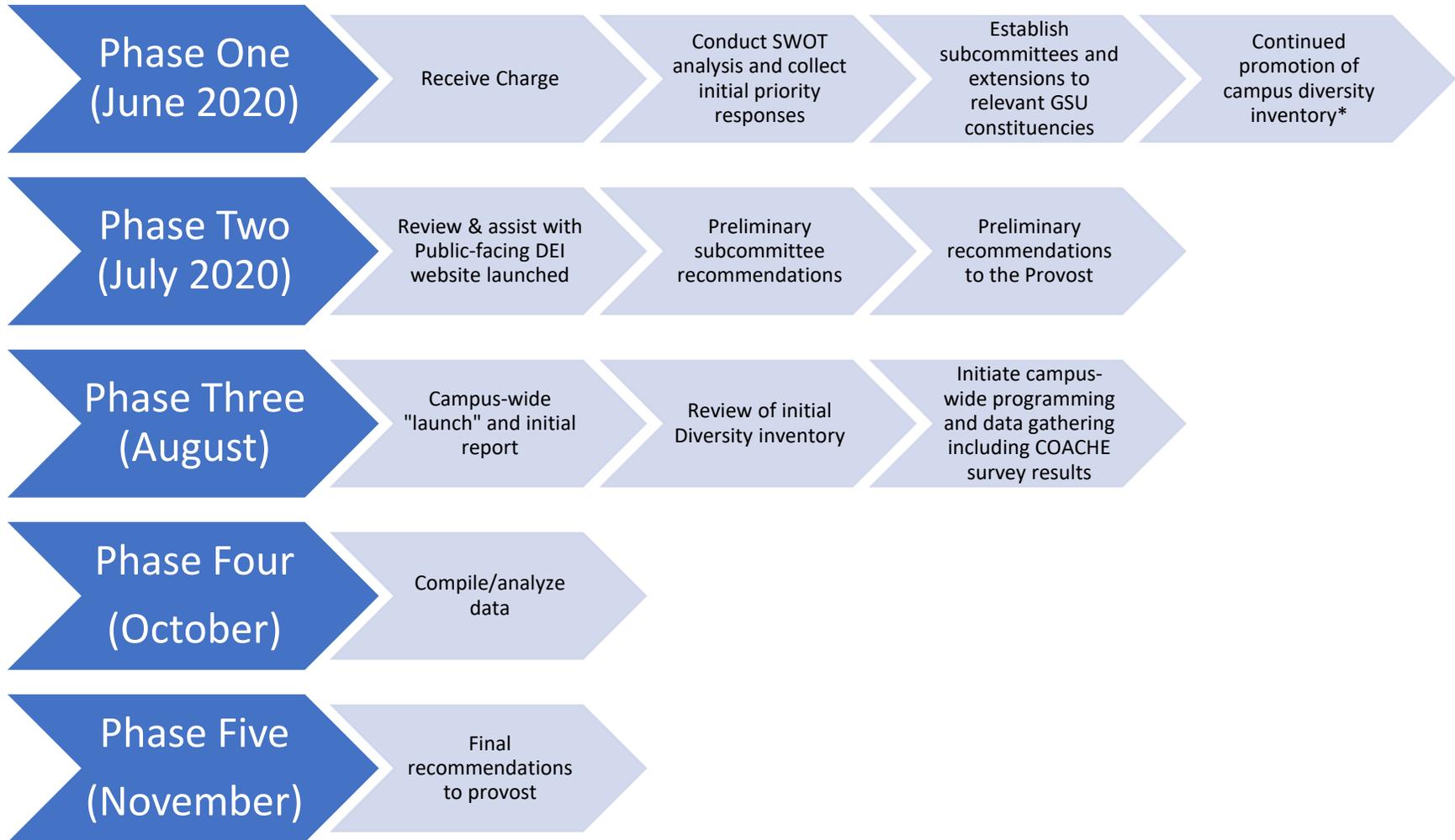
### **Administrative & Staff Affairs**

- Natsu Saito, Distinguished University Professor of Law, College of Law
- Joe Spillane, Chief of the Police Department
- Donna Frazier, Chair of Staff Council
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- Jessica Siemer, former President of the Graduate Alliance

### **Faculty Affairs**

- Collins Airhihenbuwa, Professor of Health Management and Policy, School of Public Health
- Nicolle Parsons-Pollard, Associate Provost of Faculty Affairs

Appendix C



\*[https://gsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_efUIhlwQL2LzUfb](https://gsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_efUIhlwQL2LzUfb)