

**University of Pennsylvania  
School of Social Policy & Practice**



**SP2 TASK FORCE ON RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

*Report and Recommendations Submitted to Dean Sally Bachman  
and the SP2 Community*

*January 22, 2020*

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## *Acknowledgements*

The SP2 Task Force on Race and Social Justice would like to thank and acknowledge the students who insisted SP2 improve its infusion and emphasis of anti-racism and anti-oppressive content in its five degree programs: Master in Social Work (MSW), Master of Science in Social Policy (MSSP), Master of Science in Non-profit Leadership (MSNPL), Doctorate in Clinical Social Work (DSW), and Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare (PhD). We recognize that it was the students who advocated we more effectively address issues of intersectionality, diversity, inclusion, racism, and other forms of oppression in the school community. We appreciate the support from faculty, staff, and administrators, and students who are committed and have given many hours of their time to work collaboratively and with humility towards strengthening SP2's values of social justice, diversity, accountability, and inclusion. Finally, we are grateful to Dean Sally Bachman for recognizing the value of the task force, and her commitment to the school working collectively towards implementing its recommendations.

## **Introduction and Background**

The idea for the SP2 Task Force on Race and Social Justice emerged from student concerns about the nature of classroom discussions and lack of curriculum content pertaining to issues of race, racism, and other forms of oppression in the school's five-degree programs. In the Deans and Students meetings during the fall of 2018 and the Town Hall Gathering on Race, November 7, 2018, students who identify as white, students of color, nonbinary, transgender, and/or queer, advocated for more readings on intersecting identities including sexuality, gender identity, race, and disabilities. They wanted content on intersectionality to be centered in the curriculum. It was stated that instructors could benefit from training to mediate difficult classroom conversations. Without these skills, ruptures and conflicts that occur are not effectively addressed and hamper the learning process. Students also expressed concern about the burden of educating other classmates about their identities and experiences.

When Jerri Bourjolly, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Director of the MSW Program put forth the idea of forming a school-wide task force to examine and address these issues, she heard a resounding, "yes" from student groups, staff, and faculty. At the first task force meeting on March 23, 2019, she articulated that, "we want to extend a critical lens to the work we are doing and embrace this challenge with humility. We can learn from each other and determine together how to address these challenges. We need to be open to hearing difficult things, to learning, and creating a space for this to happen. Then we will figure out how to move forward and develop an action plan together."

The goal of the task force is to promote identity, inclusion, and intersectionality among the school's constituent components: teaching, research, service, recruitment, hiring and retention, institutional advancement, and school culture. The task force is comprised of faculty, administrators, staff, and student representatives from each of SP2's five-degree programs. The task force met regularly to gather and interpret data on student experiences and developed an action plan to better align the school with the principles of social justice.

## **Charge from the Dean**

Dean Sally Bachman sent the following message to the SP2 community in March 2019 announcing the creation of the Task Force:

SP2 strives to be a space of principled inclusivity, valuing differences of opinion and fostering a community where we all think openly, honestly, reflectively, and deeply about the questions and concerns that both unite and divide us. We want to be a community that embraces diversity and intersectionality in all its dimensions.

In order to ensure that we create this community, in which we continually grow together in knowledge and understanding, I have asked members of the SP2 community to create a task force to focus on identity, inclusion and intersectionality at SP2. The task force will be known as SP2i3 (former name). From a position of cultural humility and in service of the School, the task force will gather and examine information, make recommendations, and develop an action plan to promote identity, intersectionality and inclusion in our community. The work of the task force



## **Executive Summary**

The SP2 Task Force on Race and Social Justice was created in response to student advocacy around the need for a more inclusive community and to more effectively address issues of racism and other forms of oppression. The task force's vision was to promote identity, inclusion, and intersectionality, and to advance social justice among the school's constituent components: teaching and curriculum, research, service, recruitment and admissions, hiring and retention and institutional advancement. It was comprised of faculty, administrators, staff, and student representatives from each of SP2's five degree programs. During monthly meetings from March to June and September to December, 2019, members of the task force met to discuss student, faculty, and staff experiences, and identify areas of priority to better align the school with the principle of social justice. As part of the discussions, the task force reviewed similar efforts happening at other schools of social work, including NYU's Silver School of Social Work. The discussions resulted in the following five areas for focus:

1. SP2's Structure and Leadership
2. School Climate
3. Training
4. Curriculum
5. Admissions and Financial Aid

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are organized around the five areas of focus and reflect the discussions and suggestions of the task force.

### **1. SP2's Structure and Leadership**

Three recommendations emerged related to structure and leadership at SP2.

The task force recommends that Dean Bachman appoint a standing faculty member and/or hire a staff member to provide leadership in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion. These individuals would report directly to the dean. In addition, the task force recommends the faculty create a new standing committee to advise and work with the person(s) in the leadership position. This committee should comprise individuals who represent the SP2 community, and include faculty, staff, students, and administrators. The task force acknowledges that service commitments are already in place for the current academic year and workload discussions for next year are well underway. If the standing committee cannot be formed until the start of academic year 2020 -2021, it is recommended that an advisory committee be formed for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester to continue the momentum of the task force and lay the groundwork for the standing committee.

In addition, the task force recommends that faculty actively recruit and hire women, transgender, queer, non-binary, and people of color for tenure-track positions.

## **2. School Climate**

The task force identified methods through which the school can create a more inclusive community. These include developing a bias response protocol to recognize and address harm that is caused by racism, discrimination, micro and macroaggressions and other forms of intended and non-intended oppression. Restorative justice was suggested as an approach for consideration. Pronouns should be asked, recognized, and not assumed. The task force recommends community building activities that encompass the entire SP2 community and specifically recommends the continuation of the One Book One SP2. In addition, the built environment of the Caster Building can be improved with art as a vehicle for representing and recognizing diversity and promoting inclusion. The physical space could also be enhanced with plants in classrooms and other shared spaces.

## **3. Training**

Promoting social justice, inclusion, and anti-racism and oppressive practice are the core of SP2's mission; however, not everyone has the awareness, knowledge, and skills to implement these values across various areas of the school or is able to facilitate difficult conversations. Training in these areas should be institutionalized and offered on an ongoing basis, particularly for current employees and during the onboarding of all new faculty and staff, including part-time lecturers.

An on-line summer module on racism and anti-oppressive practice should be designed and required for all new SP2 students before they start the fall semester. This should be a free, noncredit course which will not be graded but completed before the start of fall classes.

## **4. Curriculum**

The existing courses (required and elective) in each of SP2's degree programs should be reviewed and revised to ensure that content on racism, anti-oppression, intersectionality, difference, and social justice is included. The task force encourages faculty and program staff to initiate these reviews and for students to be included. This curriculum review should identify strengths and weaknesses and describe how gaps will be addressed. Moving forward, all new classes should include this content. Strategies for integrating this information should be determined by the program leadership and faculty.

## **5. Admissions and Financial Aid**

Financial aid should continue as a top priority for SP2. The task force recommends the school increase the number of full scholarships in each of the degree programs, with an emphasis on recruiting a diverse student body, particularly students of color from the Philadelphia area.

## **Conclusion**

The Task Force on Race and Social Justice brought together individuals from across the SP2 community, including all degree programs and key roles (e.g. full-time faculty, part-time faculty, students and staff) to assess needs and develop recommendations for creating a more equitable

and inclusive school community. The task force provided an opportunity for members to share their perspectives and engage in open conversations to identify needs and develop recommendations for each area of focus. The recommendations presented in this report reflect the cumulative work of the task force and seek to offer guidance to SP2 leadership for advancing racial and social justice and fostering a more equitable and inclusive school community.



## **Appendix A: Task Force Membership**

Joretha Bourjolly, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Director of MSW Program, Chair

Obed Arango, Part-time Lecturer

Heather Bense, DSW student

Sherie Brown, Financial Aid Coordinator

Raekwon Burton, 2nd year MSW student

Sarah Craig, Coordinator, On-Campus MS in Nonprofit Leadership Program

Donkey Dover, Associate Director of Institutional Advancement and Campaign Strategy

Adiza Ezell, Associate Director of Admissions

Toorjo Ghose, Associate Professor

Johanna Greeson, Associate Professor

Lina Hartocollis, Dean of Students, Director, Doctorate in Social Work Program

Amy Hillier, Associate Professor

Arie Hayre-Somuah, First-year MSW student

Karen Hudson, Part-time Lecturer, Alumna, Field Instructor

Eda Kauffman, Director of Field Education

Hanh Hao La, Director of Applied Research and Analysis, Center for High Impact Philanthropy

Khalil Martin, Second year MSW student (alternate)

Melanie Masin-Moyer, Full-time Lecturer

Kay McGuffin, Alum

Tonnica Malcolm, DSW Student

Michelle Mullen, PhD student

Autumn Ondo, MSW student

Melissa Ortiz, Applied Research Analyst, Center for High Impact Philanthropy

Azahara Palomeque, Associate Director, Master of Science in Social Policy Program

Christine Pappas, MSSP student

Catherine Revak, Part-time Faculty, DSW student

Katie Rupp, Assistant to Dean Bachman

Ariel Schwartz, Part-time Lecturer, Managing Director, Center for Social Impact Strategy

Anastasia Shown, Part-time Lecturer

Kristen Smith, Senior Research Coordinator, Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy

Mark Stern, Professor

Jennifer Jones Clinkscales, Associate Director of Student Services

Felicia Wong, NPL student

### **Former students from AY 2018-19**

Sarah Coquillat, MSW student

Mai Eltahir, MSSP student

Tatiana Fraga Diez, NPL student

Kel Kroehle, DSW student

### **Former staff**

Eli Lesser, Former Executive Director of Educational Innovation

Janice Orlov, Former Associate Dean for Finance and Administration

## **Appendix B: Racism Town Hall Minutes 11/7/18**

- **Goal: Have a productive discussion about how to make the racism sequence the best experience for everyone.**
- Two parts:
  - o Content of the syllabi: what needs to be added/taken away
  - o Classroom dynamics: emotional labor & professor facilitation

### **Major Takeaways:**

- **Content:**
  - o Needs more readings from people of intersecting identities including sexuality, gender identity, disabilities, etc.
  - o Too many readings by white cisgender men.
  - o The course feels like it has an identity conflict between being a history class and a theory class. The two are intrinsically linked so it's impossible to separate them. Would it be possible to split the semester in half between history and theory?
  - o Intentional readings: it would be more valuable to have fewer readings that are really delved into in class versus several readings that are somewhat discussed or not discussed at all.
  - o Integrate fiction and non-fiction readings, podcasts, and films.
  - o Focus on getting everyone [on] the same page for the beginning of the semester: required different required work over the summer. E.g. Language around equity and critical race theory.
  - o Course is called American Racism but severely lacks readings and conversations around Native Americans, Asian Americans, refugees, etc.
  - o Connect theory and practice. E.g. connect critical race theory with what it can look like in our practice.
  - o Readings on intersectionality need to be centered in the curriculum, not extra.
  - o There is a lack of connecting critical race theory with historical social work practice. How do agencies perpetuate racism?
  - o Integrate self-reflective writing. [Self-reflection can mean different things in different contexts, it was expressed that a classroom where white students come to terms with their privilege every week isn't enough and can be violent for students of color].
  - o Racism sequence needs to collaborate with other required SWRK courses.

- o Can the sequence implement the Track system? So that students who are on similar levels can be grouped together?
- o Could the class be made to be pass/fail instead of letter grades?
- o The 713 capstone project seems inappropriate as students who are interns at their agencies risk ruffling feathers or getting fired by investigating racial dynamics in the organization. Argued that <year is not enough time to do a capstone project on an agency.
- **Classroom Dynamics:**
  - o If there are going to be instructors who are white, they need to go through training to confront their own privilege.
  - o Everyone can be trained to mediate difficult conversations. When people don't have these skills there are often times ruptures that are not able to be repaired, e.g. conflicts between students.
  - o Implementing trauma informed teaching. These topics bring up different things for different people.
  - o How can students with different backgrounds exist in a learning space together in a way that does not negatively impact marginalized students. We don't want echo chambers or rooms where no one is talking.
  - o It's important for white students to speak up.
  - o Can student's white privilege be confronted before starting the semester?
  - o Implicit bias test as a tool for learning at the beginning of the semester.
  - o What are the dynamics for the professors outside of the classroom—are they checking in with each other about their experiences as facilitators?
  - o Deconstruct different levels of racial dynamics and putting it in terms of practice: what are we bringing into each room?
  - o Classroom dynamics are extremely important- some classes didn't even do names on the first day.
  - o It's hard to have discussions of this caliber in a large group because it takes time to build rapport. Structuring conversations so there's smaller group work or rapport building in order to better these dynamics.