



# Racial Justice Task Force

## FRAMING FOR THE FUTURE

Committing to Racial Equity at Bentley



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# Introduction

In the timeline of diversity and inclusion efforts at Bentley University, the creation of the Racial Justice Task Force will mark a critical development. Coming at a time of racial reckoning across the country, this community change initiative provided a source for healing, honest examination, and clarity. Rather than tearing us apart as a community, the painful stories of racial discrimination and bias shared by black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) through town halls, listening sessions, and social media accounts gave us an opportunity to reaffirm our desire to build a University committed to equity and justice for all racial groups.

The power of this Task Force coming together is not the creation of this document but rather the journey we took and the ways we engaged the community along the way. As a result, this document that summarizes our discoveries may be unlike what this community has seen before or come to expect.



*And yes we are far from polished/ far from pristine/ but that doesn't mean we are/ striving to form a union that is perfect/ we are striving to forge a union with purpose.*

**Amanda Gorman**

“The Hill We Climb”, 2021 Presidential Inauguration Poem

## This Document:

- **Represents a narrative about the process of discovery this Task Force engaged in, not just a list of policy or practice recommendations.** While there are calls to action contained in this document, we have chosen to emphasize the process that led to these insights as a way to demonstrate the power of thoughtful, brave, and deliberate reflection and dialogue to influence the campus in meaningful ways. We have also included reflections on the journey to highlight how we evolved in our understanding of race and racism at Bentley throughout the process.
- **Provides an honest and unvarnished examination of who we are in this moment, not a sanitized view of where we hope to go.** The truths about our culture that are revealed here generally do not get discussed, although we all recognize the ways in which they operate on campus. We believe that the only way to transform the University is to acknowledge and confront the ways in which our culture perpetuates an environment where racism can thrive.
- **Demonstrates the continuation of the work, not the end of our work.** The calls to action contained in this document are not “one and done” fixes but rather areas for sustained investment that will pay dividends far into the future. We recognize that we are not starting from zero, but that we have a foundation supported by our values and often championed by individuals of color that will benefit us in taking real action. The systemic changes recommended build on the foundation laid over the more than 100 years of our development as an institution and honor all of those who have poured their time and energy into diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the past.
- **Calls the University and individuals in the community to act, but does not provide an implementation plan.** As a volunteer Task Force, we were given a very broad charge to explore how racism was operating at Bentley and to identify ways to systematically address the impact of racism on campus. We believe that by naming the culture, creating spaces for healing and dialogue, and identifying areas for investment we have maximized our influence but that ultimately we do not have authority to make decisions or change policies. This document, therefore, acts as a guide and resource to help move the University forward.
- **Encourages everyone to contribute, not a hierarchical view of who is responsible for change.** We believe everyone — students, faculty, staff and alumni — has the power to affect change on our campus. Rather than a list of specific tasks, we highlight broader areas for sustained investment to allow each of us to identify where we will contribute. We also provide resources to ensure people are equipped to engage in the work no matter how they are affiliated with the University. The aspiration statements and areas for investment included later in this document will provide a reference point for all the work that is to come.

This may be a static document but the discoveries contained within it should continue to live on to ensure that we act on what we have learned. The insights that are contained here are the result of sustained conversation and examination. As we continue to evolve through our actions to become a more actively anti-racist community we will gain an even deeper understanding of the ways race impacts our community and effective approaches to counter these impacts. We must commit to regularly updating our progress, including our actions and discoveries, to avoid forgetting all that we have learned. True organizational transformation depends on our willingness to use this experience as a catalyst for further change rather than seeing it as an ending to a painful time in our history.

In her 2021 presidential inauguration poem, “The Hill We Climb”, Amanda Gorman offered these words to the nation.

*“And yes we are far from polished/ far from pristine/ but that doesn't mean we are/ striving to form a union that is perfect/ we are striving to forge a union with purpose.”*

Let this be a call to us as well. What we are trying to achieve does not require us to have everything detailed and defined but rather to recognize and acknowledge our imperfections and move forward toward racial equity and justice anyway. If we allow this moment to pass without taking real action then,

*“our inaction and inertia/ will be the inheritance of the next generation.”*

# 01

## Process of Discovery

On June 8, 2020, the academic leadership team sent a note to students, faculty, and staff reflecting on conversations of race and systemic racism reverberating throughout our country and our campus. Included in that message was the commitment to launch what is now known as the *Racial Justice Task Force*. Shortly thereafter, Bentley's leadership solicited self-nominations for volunteers to serve on the Task Force. The call was a deliberate attempt to include a diversity of voices with regard to identity, experience, talents, and passion, in order to look inward with a critical lens. Proudly, more than 100 members of the community, including students, faculty, staff, and alumni, bringing with them a variety of backgrounds and experiences, joined the effort. A list of Task Force members can be found in the appendix.



*Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.*

**Delores Huerta**

Civil Rights Activist, Co-Founder United Farm Workers of America (UFW)



### STRUCTURE

The Task Force officially launched in July of 2020 with virtual meetings, which although necessitated by pandemic restrictions ultimately allowed for more voices to be heard and included. A subset of this larger group was selected to serve as the Core Team, and met bi-monthly to organize and steer the work of the larger Task Force. Members of the Task Force were divided into four committees:

- **ASSESSMENT** — Tasked with assessing existing data and creating a dashboard that reflects our current compositional diversity
- **COMMUNICATIONS** — Tasked with consistently and transparently communicating the efforts of the Task Force
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT** — Tasked with engaging the community in a series of restorative, educational, and listening sessions to create awareness and allow for information gathering
- **RACIAL EQUITY TOOLKIT** — Tasked with creating a resource to guide individual offices and organizations in the evaluation of their racial justice efforts

## APPROACH

The Racial Justice Task Force was intentionally designed as a collective change process that invited everyone in the community to engage in experiences to facilitate sense-making in the aftermath of national and campus-wide racial trauma. Informed by research that followed the campus activism that swept the nation in 2016 (Kezar et al., 2018), the Task Force’s approach was rooted in restorative and educational practices that worked to create opportunities for individual and collective reflection, learning, and exploration. This process of discovery was designed in three phases: Restoration and Education, Listening and Contextualizing, and Framing for the Future.

RESTORATION AND  
EDUCATION  
JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 2020

LISTENING AND  
CONTEXTUALIZING  
OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2020

FRAMING FOR  
THE FUTURE  
JANUARY TO MARCH 2021

### Restoration and Education

The first phase of our journey was designed to allow space to acknowledge and process the impact of the current racial trauma in our society and to educate the community in preparation for the work to come. We recognized that we could not simply jump to a solution. We had to take time to heal those who had been traumatized and to educate those who did not understand race and racism and how they operate in our society and at Bentley. This was a critical phase of the journey and one without which we would not have been able to come to the deep insights about our culture and the path forward that we share here.

The members of the Task Force used this phase to explore questions like “*What does it mean to be an anti-racist community?*” and “*how do we avoid the common pitfalls and detours to the creation of racial equity?*” To involve the community the Task Force hosted a Q&A session, created a video explaining key concepts like systemic racism and equity, and organized a racial justice speaker series. The program that most powerfully symbolized this phase was the Racial Healing Practice Challenge. Based on *The Racial Healing Handbook* by Dr. Annelise Singh, this eight-week challenge encouraged individuals to reflect on the impact of race and engage in brave conversations about their discoveries in dialogue groups. The experience was organized around four themes - knowing your racial identity, exploring internalized racism, raising race consciousness, and understanding collective racial healing. Participants in this experience shared powerful experiences of growth, connection, and empowerment.

### Listening and Contextualizing

The second phase of the journey was focused on active and shared inquiry into the sources of racial inequality on our campus. The Task Force sponsored listening sessions and worked to gather insights about racism across all divisions. These efforts required serious reflection on the part of all community members about the state of racial equity and justice on campus and the ways in which we individually and collectively contribute to it. Through the Big Questions for Bentley series, town halls, and student-sponsored Community Conversations the Task Force was able to uncover a lot of information about how the culture at Bentley works. The Big Questions for Bentley series in particular, invited students, faculty, staff, and alumni into brave spaces for dialogue. The Task Force generated a list of questions that addressed the experience of racism on campus and for these sessions, selected the three that were the most intriguing. “*How does race show up at Bentley?*” “*How does racism show up at Bentley?*” “*How do we define success?*”



***Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.***

**James Baldwin**

Essayist, Novelist, Playwright and Activist

During this phase, the Task Force also set an intention to uncover racial equity gaps through data gathering and assessment. Using an equity-minded lens, the Assessment committee hoped to identify key areas across the institution where there was a difference in either access, achievement, or outcomes based on race. This proved to be a bigger challenge than the Task Force realized. While we were able to develop a list of information and data that we would like to access both from qualitative and quantitative methods, we were unable to do so. We discovered that in many cases we do not collect the data we were interested in or that the data was not collected consistently or in a way that would allow us to disaggregate it in meaningful ways. The effort required to collect, clean, and analyze the data necessary to conduct a true equity analysis would have required resources and time that the Task Force simply did not have. The Assessment committee instead focused on identifying the information necessary for the creation of a dashboard that makes our current demographic composition more accessible. In addition, the committee identified key questions for examination including a proposal for qualitative assessments of the culture. We recognize this fell short of our intended action and that to move the conversation forward we must complete the assessment we set out to do. Recommendations for this next step are reflected in the areas for investment identified in this document.

### Framing for the Future

This document and the conversations that led to its creation represent the third phase of our journey, as we share our discoveries and invite everyone to find their role in moving the work forward. The Task Force has worked to make suggestions and provide resources to sustain the commitment to addressing racial inequality by identifying key areas for investment, developing a dashboard to provide more transparency, and creating a Racial Equity Toolkit to equip community members with a framework for reflection and action.

We want to call the reader’s attention to the resources that have been developed to complement this document and can be found at [bentley.edu/racial-justice-discovery-document](https://bentley.edu/racial-justice-discovery-document).

- **The Inclusive Excellence Dashboard** provides an interactive tool with measures the four areas of the Inclusive Excellence framework - access and success, climate and intergroup relations, education and success, and institutional commitment and capacity. Users can find disaggregated compositional data, academic outcomes, and limited survey responses. We will continue to add to these measures as we identify and begin to measure new goals related to racial equity.
- **The Racial Equity Toolkit** is an interactive guide designed to assist University offices, departments and student organizations in exploring and planning racial equity and anti-racism work. It is divided into two sections. The foundational section provides questions that help elevate the group’s reflection from an individual to a systemic process. The operational section provides questions that help groups to identify opportunities to take action based on their reflection. For groups unsure of how to begin discussing and developing plans to impact systemic racism this guide is a valuable resource.

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**The Task Force has taken all of the feedback and insights that have come from the various phases of our work and used them to detail not only what we see as opportunities for the future but barriers to our progress. The opportunities we identified are listed as areas for investment and include steps to impact not only BIPOC communities, but all of us, to ensure that we are better equipped to handle these moments of racial awareness in the future. The barriers to progress that we identified represent one of the biggest revelations of this journey. These barriers represent cultural norms that helped to reveal why the problem of racism remained hidden from so many while so painfully impacting others. These cultural norms, detailed in the next section, must be discussed more and better understood if we are to make sustainable change for the future.**

## REFLECTION

Throughout our process of discovery, Task Force members were asked to submit pulse surveys to help us gauge the impact of our work and its progress, but to also understand the emotional journey of our members. Task Force members began the journey with a mixture of hope and trepidation, voicing things like *“Turning Bentley into a university that embraces anti-racism will mean that I may feel uncomfortable and may have to let go of some of my privileges.”* As the work evolved, Task Force members began to feel more informed and able to see the nature and magnitude of the issues being addressed noting, *“These questions/problems are systemic, but must be taken down brick by brick, which can feel overwhelming.”* At the end of the journey members reported feeling encouraged and also aware of the reality of the nature of change stating *“The work we have embarked on is not a destination, it remains a journey.”*

The range in emotions throughout the journey were matched by our members’ increased ability to strategically think about how to impact systemic racism. At the beginning of the process, there was an idealized view that the Task Force would be able to easily and readily identify every change needed to eradicate racism. However, members started to realize the reflection activities and anti-racist knowledge development that were part of each Task Force meeting were essential to crafting areas of investment and aspirations grounded in the current reality of racism at Bentley. This shift in understanding was essential to the creation of this report, which was reflected in comments from Task Force members like, *“Not rushing to tangible action can actually be a good thing. Taking the time to be sure there is shared understanding of the underlying problems is critical for success.”*

The process this Task Force followed was not always comfortable for the group. There was a desire throughout the journey to jump to solutions rather than staying in a space of reflection and learning. It is critical to note this dynamic as it is illustrative of the symptoms of the problem of racism on our campus. Slowing the process down gave the Task Force the chance not only to see the ways the system operates at Bentley but also to uncover the ways we individually participate in those systems and perpetuate them. We have learned that the goal cannot be to fix racism, but rather to see racism and actively and intentionally work to reduce the impact it has in our community. As the Task Force became more comfortable standing in this discomfort, a deeper understanding of the University began to emerge and true transformation became possible.



***The heartbeat of anti-racism is self-reflection, recognition, admission and fundamentally self-critique ...***

**Ibram X. Kendi**  
Author and Activist

17

CORE TEAM MEMBERS

114

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

30+

MEETINGS HELD

50+

HOURS OF MEETINGS PER  
TASK FORCE MEMBER

350

ATTENDEES AT  
TASK FORCE EVENTS

5

OFFICIAL TASK FORCE  
SPONSORED EVENTS

4

COMMITTEES FORMED

270+

MEMBERS PARTICIPATED IN  
THE 8-WEEK RACIAL HEALING  
PRACTICE CHALLENGE

# Process Timeline

## JULY

**7/16/2020**

First full Racial Justice Task Force meeting.

### BEGIN RESTORATION AND EDUCATION PHASE

**7/22/2020**

First Racial Justice Core Team meeting.

## SEPTEMBER

**9/1/2020**

Racial Healing Practice Challenge launches.

**9/17/2020**

Racial Justice Task Force Meeting: *What is Equity Mindedness?*

**9/29/2020**

Fireside Chat with Nick Noel of McKinsey & Company: *Unlocking Economic Growth: Investing in Racial Equity.*<sup>1</sup>

## NOVEMBER

**11/3/2020**

Big Question 2: *How Does Racism Show Up on Bentley's Campus?*

**11/10/2020**

Talk by Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: *Let's Talk About Environmental Justice.*<sup>3</sup>

**11/16/2020**

Big Question 3: *How Do We Define Student and Alumni Success at Bentley?*

**11/17/20**

Racial Justice Task Force Meeting: *What Patterns and Themes are Emerging?*

## JANUARY

**1/14/2021**

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion announces a new Bentley Brave offering: The Whiteness Accountability Group.

**1/19/2021**

Racial Justice Task Force Meeting: *Review Racial Equity Toolkit.*

**1/21/2021**

Second opportunity to participate in Racial Healing Practice Challenge.

### BEGIN FRAMING FOR THE FUTURE PHASE

## MARCH

**3/24/2021**

Racial Justice Task Force releases discovery document, racial equity toolkit, and inclusive excellence dashboard.

## RESTORATION AND EDUCATION

JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 2020

## LISTENING AND CONTEXTUALIZING

OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2020

## FRAMING FOR THE FUTURE

JANUARY TO MARCH 2021

## JUNE

**6/8/2020**

Academic Leadership Team sends note to students, faculty and staff reflecting on conversations of race and systemic racism reverberating throughout our country and our campus.

Solicits self-nominations to volunteer to serve on Racial Justice Task Force.

## AUGUST

**8/1/2020**

Racial Justice Task Force committee meetings begin.

**8/3/2020**

First email update sent.

**8/4/2020**

Cabinet announces first set of strategic initiatives for racial justice targeting every division.

**8/6/2020**

Racial Justice Task Force website launches.

**8/10/2020**

Racial Justice Task Force hosts: Campus Q&A Feedback Session.

**8/12/20**

Racial Justice Task Force Meeting: *Does it Mean to be an Anti-Racist University?*

## OCTOBER

**10/13/2020**

Conversation with Anne Rawls and Waverly Duck *Tacit Racism: A Clear and Present Danger.*<sup>2</sup>

**10/15/2020**

Racial Justice Task Force Meeting: *How do you set Equity Minded Goals?*

### BEGIN LISTENING AND CONTEXTUALIZING PHASE

**10/21/2020**

Big Question 1: *How Does Race Show Up on Bentley's Campus?*

## DECEMBER

**12/15/2020**

Racial Justice Task Force Meeting: *Explore Cultural Characteristics.*

**12/18/2020**

Process of crafting the final discovery document begins.

## FEBRUARY

**2/16/2021**

Racial Justice Task Force Meeting: *Evaluate Strategic Priorities.*

<sup>1</sup> Co-sponsored with the Valente Center and the Trading Room

<sup>2</sup> Co-sponsored with the Valente Center

<sup>3</sup> Co-sponsored with the Valente Center and the Office of Sustainability

# 02

## Cultural Barriers to Transformation

The desire to remove systemic barriers to racial equity and justice is much easier to name than to achieve. Organizational change of any kind meets resistance and when that change acknowledges patterns of inequality based on race, this phenomenon may be particularly acute. The process undertaken by the Racial Justice Task Force worked to unearth a set of cultural norms that act as a barrier to achieving a more holistic view of racial equity and justice that goes beyond representation. These characteristics are primarily unconscious and operate in ways that are hard to see if you are in the majority but which become very apparent if you are in a minoritized (Stuart, 2013) group. The following themes describing Bentley's culture emerged from our conversations as a Task Force and as a community.



*You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it.*

**Grace Lee Boggs**

Philosopher, Author and Activist

### STATUS QUO OVER AWARENESS

**Bentley is a historically and predominantly white institution (HWI/PWI), and its culture reflects that truth. The lack of representation across all levels of the University creates blind spots that prevent people from questioning assumptions or cultural norms. Consequently, there is little value placed on learning about race and racism because there is little awareness that these phenomena exist in the community. Where awareness exists there is a lack of support to address the root causes.**

This characteristic is reflected in our curriculum. There are almost 100 courses that satisfy the diversity-intensive requirement in the curriculum. A small proportion of these courses address race as their focus (ex. Race and the Law, Native American Literature & Culture) or include discussions of race in significant ways in the content (ex. Managing Diversity in the Workplace, Diversity Minorities & Social Change). It is also worth noting that only 2 of these diversity intensive courses exist in the business disciplines meaning that students rarely encounter discussions of race in their chosen major. This speaks to a lack of understanding about why the study of race is critical to the creation of a full academic experience and limited will to embed this learning in the formal curriculum as a requirement. Many see the study of race as learning about what race is rather than thinking about race as *something that results* from the ways in which we interact with one another and systems. When seen through this lens, we can better understand why ignoring the impact of race in any discipline results in an incomplete understanding of the field. There is a growing *call for business* to do more to impact race and we need to *prepare all our students* to be able to respond to these calls. The status quo, especially during a time when the curriculum is under review, should not be allowed to stand. Now is the time to make a bold stand and name learning about the social and organizational impact of race and racism an essential part of the curriculum and embed opportunities for this learning throughout the learning experience for all students.

### APPEARANCE OVER SUBSTANCE

**The culture at Bentley rewards those who preserve the appearance of perfection, not those who reveal challenges or concerns. There is a low tolerance for discomfort and difficult conversations are avoided, especially when race or racial injustice is involved. Individuals who raise a concern are often blamed rather than encouraged to question the status quo. This results in defensiveness and a lack of transparency and accountability because issues are not identified or are hidden.**

This cultural characteristic was revealed in the emergence of the @ BlackatBentley Instagram account. The alumni who formed the social media account, similar to *others like it* across the country, did so because they felt the University was attempting to ignore their concerns and to present an idyllic picture of the realities of the racial climate at Bentley. The more than 100 stories revealed through that account, many of which were never formally reported to the University, also demonstrate a lack of trust in the systems currently in place to respond to incidents of discrimination, bias and harassment. According to an EAB report, *Student Activism Across the Last 5 Years: What Higher Ed Leaders Need to Know About Evolving Challenges*, racial justice was the most significant driver of activism across universities over the last five years. The research points to the fact that students are expecting faster responses, are less interested in negotiating, and are requiring more actionable next steps. Students are not the only group impacted by racism on our campus however, and we heard similar concerns coming from employees who are also seeking outcomes instead of assurances. Rather than hiding from the truth that these stories reveal, we must learn from this experience and take affirmative steps to demonstrate that we are willing to hear what is not working and take action to address it. In addition, we must actively provide spaces to hear these concerns, so that we can acknowledge the realities of our culture and proactively work to prevent these problems before they occur rather than waiting for a crisis to bring them to the surface.



## CONTENT OVER PROCESS

**A sense of urgency drives the culture at Bentley, allowing little room for discovery and long-term thinking. Priority is placed on achieving more, faster, and only outcomes that can be measured are valued. Short-term impact takes precedence, limiting the ability to understand the true, long-term cost of decisions. There is a false confidence in objectivity and meritocracy, with little regard for systemic inequality resulting in policies and practices that favor those in the majority.**

The overreliance on standardized testing as a measure of preparedness for academic success at Bentley is an example of this cultural characteristic. The myth of meritocracy reinforces deficit-based thinking that creates a narrative that the underrepresentation of students of color, particularly black students, at Bentley is a result of weaker academic performance. However, a closer examination of our practices reveals that our emphasis on standardized test scores, a practice that is common across higher education, is creating artificial barriers to access for academically qualified students of color. These students have similar curriculums and grades but lower performance on tests like the ACT and SAT which suffer from well-documented access and equity concerns. This policy also impacts other groups on campus like women, international students, and those from lower socio-economic households whose test scores do not reflect their true academic potential. In a 2020 National Association for College Counseling (NACAC) report titled, *Ensuring All Students Have Access to Higher Education: The Role of Standardized Testing in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond*, the association encourages colleges and universities to rethink their usage of standardized tests in the admissions process.

“Postsecondary institutions have effectively entrusted the College Board and ACT with the authority of serving as a third-party certifier of students’ qualification for admission. As the population interested in admission to college has rapidly expanded and diversified, however, testing agencies have not been able to ensure that the access to and availability of test administrations, the quality of the testing experience, and the integrity and validity of test scores are preserved consistently. Moreover, “test prep” — at first scorned by the testing agencies and now embraced — has burgeoned into a billion dollar industry, creating added equity challenges and calling into question the reliability of test scores as true measures of student abilities” (p. 7-8).

More than two-thirds of all US colleges and universities, Bentley among them, have adopted *temporary test-optional policies* for the class of 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 crisis according to the National Center for Fair and Open Testing (Fair Test). We must find the will to make this change permanent and continue to review our admissions policies and practices in line with the calls from the industry to find more holistic ways of reviewing academic potential.

## ISOLATION OVER COLLABORATION

**Power and decision-making is concentrated in silos at Bentley. Access to information and data is controlled, limiting the potential for inclusive and informed decision-making. There is no effort made to solicit different viewpoints or perspectives, as those in power assume, they can make the best decision for everyone. Decisions are made *for*, not *with*, those most impacted, resulting in unintended consequences.**

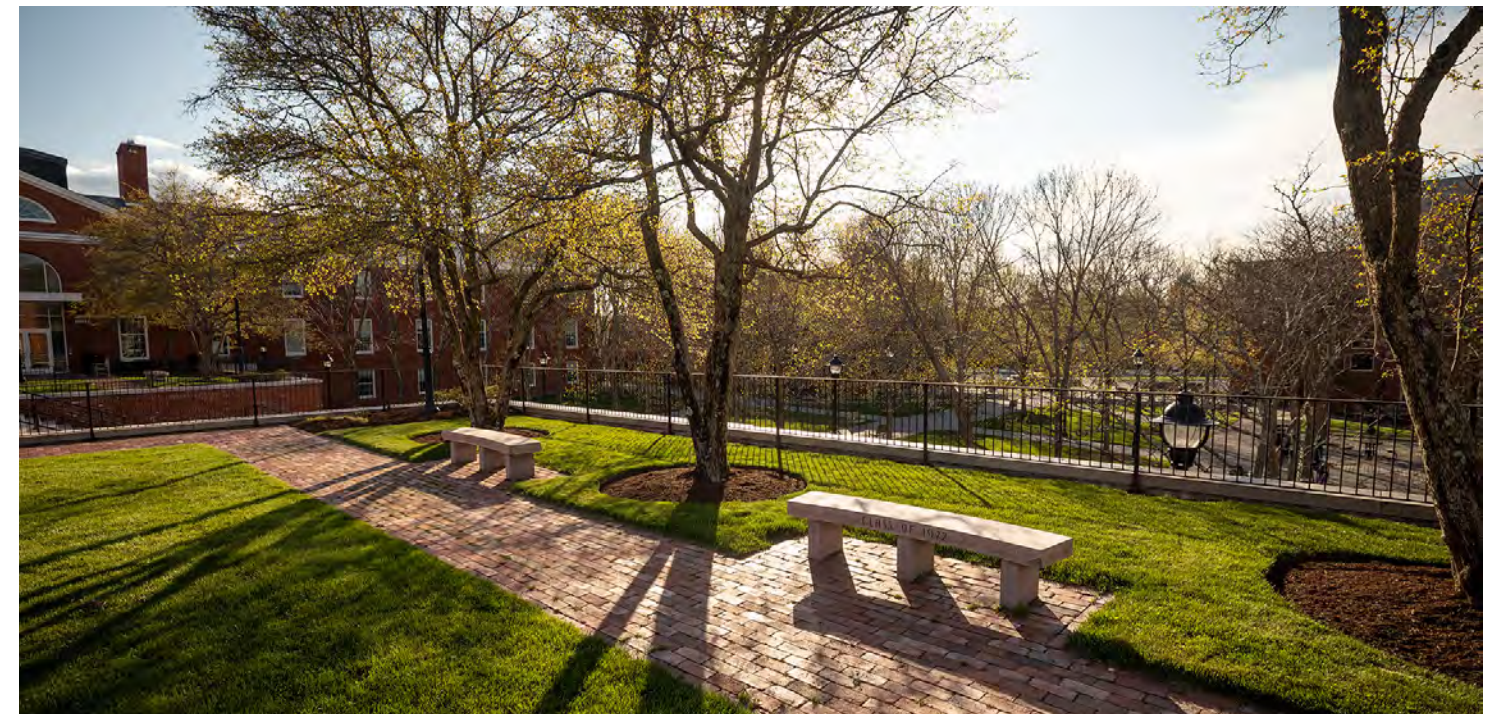
One example of this cultural characteristic is the restructuring of the student center in 2015, that impacted the location of the Multicultural Center (MCC). While the move to a more open floor plan with individual and group study spaces was beneficial for many reasons, the decision to move the MCC to a more visible location and to provide a cultural lounge instead of a separate dedicated center had an adverse impact on students of color. Safe spaces are defined as spaces that allow marginalized individuals opportunities to retreat from the very real threats and demands they face by their very existence on campus. According to a 2017 NASPA policy paper titled, *Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces: Historical Context and Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals*, these spaces emerged “as a result of a call for institutional accountability to address campus climate concerns for marginalized and underrepresented students.” The decision to shift the space did not adequately consider the needs of this particular population and the current calls for more safe space on our campus reflects a need to work collaboratively with students to explore, design and build a space that addresses their needs.

## REFLECTION

The careful consideration required to reveal these patterns of behavior was a departure from the standard ways of being at Bentley. The Task Force repeatedly had to fight the urge to jump to solutions in our efforts to first understand the nature of the problem. The themes that emerged are not unique to Bentley. In fact, many of these characteristics can be found in descriptions of white supremacy (dominant) culture (Jones & Okun, 2001) and can manifest in any organization, but are more prevalent in ones that are historically and predominantly white. In and of themselves these characteristics are not harmful if they are visible and agreed upon by the community. However, when they operate in unconscious and unseen ways, as they often do at Bentley, they work to slow our progress, even as we earnestly work to create a more just and equitable community.

*“All of us in the academy and in the culture as a whole are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions — and society — so that the way we live, teach, and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice, and our love of freedom.”*  
*bell hooks*, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (p.34)

Revealing and acknowledging the impact of these characteristics, especially so publicly in a document like this, works against the cultural norms at Bentley. That is why it is a necessary and powerful step towards achieving our goal of creating a more actively anti-racist community. We also believe that these characteristics impact the climate in ways that move beyond race to impact all minoritized groups reducing our ability to create an inclusive campus for everyone. Acknowledging these cultural patterns of behavior and how they work to prevent the creation of a racially just and equitable environment is difficult but necessary on our journey to meaningful change. Now that everyone, not just those in minoritized communities, is more aware of these cultural characteristics, we can take action towards replacing them with ways of being that favor more equity-minded decision-making and more justice-oriented policies and practices.



# 03

## From Aspiration to Action

This process of brave reflection and engagement revealed a community that believes in the value of diversity and inclusion, but that has not fully embraced the necessity of racial equity and justice. A community that recognizes it is both a historically and predominantly white institution (Bourke, 2016) but does not see the impact of that reality on communities of color. A community that has built a solid foundation for supporting minoritized students through individual centers and positions but has not formalized the structures required to assure institutional systemic accountability. A community that aspires to be but that has not yet become actively anti-racist.

This story of aspiration without action is compounded by the lack of a compelling vision for what we are trying to achieve in terms of racial justice and equity. We understand broadly that we want to be more actively anti-racist but we have not defined what that looks like for Bentley. In our current institutional vision, we state that we will create a national model for business-focused education that develops leaders for positive change and provides transformational, lifelong value to students, alumni, the business community, and society. This is our opportunity to ask ourselves: What would this vision look like if it were written to include a commitment to racial equity and justice?

The Task Force sought to answer these questions by developing a series of aspiration statements that begin to articulate a vision for who we want to be as a community. These statements are based on three main strategic areas of priority that we see as essential to address if we want to truly become a more anti-racist campus. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather what we have identified as the most important areas to address at this point in our transformation. We have also articulated related areas for investment based on the themes that emerged from our discussions to guide the community in identifying next steps in our collective journey.

As you review these three strategic priorities we encourage you to reflect on what it would be like if Bentley were to achieve the ideal state in the aspiration statement. How would this impact your experience of the campus? Your peers' experiences? Search the areas of investment for items that resonate most with you and identify things that you can do in your areas of influence to take action to impact them. Many ideas were shared for suggested action steps and we have included those ideas and descriptions of our thinking in the appendix as an additional source of inspiration for further action.

## Strategic Priority: Invest in Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Communities

### ASPIRATION STATEMENT

**A community and a culture that truly values, respects, and empowers BIPOC voices and contributions and understands that for the University to thrive it must actively work to uncover and remove structural barriers preventing the full, equitable, and authentic engagement and sense of belonging of BIPOC individuals.**

Representation matters but is not an adequate measure of the degree to which a University values and respects members of the community. At the heart of the concerns raised throughout our journey of discovery was the lack of inclusion many people in the BIPOC community feel at Bentley. We all have a desire to feel a sense of belonging in the communities we inhabit and that is missing for many or comes only as a result of sacrificing a sense of authenticity. There is a symbiotic relationship that must exist between working to increase the representation of individuals of color on our campus while creating the conditions where those individuals are given the freedom to thrive.

Our viability as an institution rests on our ability to invest in the creation of a community that is welcoming to BIPOC individuals. The rapidly changing racial *demographic landscape* for college-aged students combined with the increasing racial diversity in the workforce makes this a particularly acute issue for us to impact. We recognize the current efforts to increase the racial diversity within the student body and the faculty but question whether enough is being done to attract specific groups. For example the percentage of Black students continues to hover at 4%, representing only 40–45 students each year in an incoming undergraduate class of 1000. Similarly, while the percentage of undergraduate students who identify as Hispanic continues to rise the percentage of Hispanic faculty remains extremely low with only 5 full-time Hispanic faculty members out of 282 full-time faculty members in the entire University. It is unclear what the priorities and goals are for achieving more parity across these groups, but it cannot fall simply to Enrollment Management, Faculty Leadership, or Human Resources to solve this issue.

To be a destination of choice for people of color will require credibility and we have heard a clear message that BIPOC members of our community question our sincerity. Bentley's status as a historically and predominantly white institution shapes the culture in ways that directly impact the experiences of non-white members of the community. It is in the everyday interactions, not our carefully crafted marketing materials or values statements, that we send a message to current and future members of the community about the kind of culture that exists. We will know we have achieved our aspirations not only when the numbers begin to grow but when the retention is also impacted. Bentley must act in intentional ways to rebuild and sustain our credibility if we are to attract and retain the talent we need to survive.

### Areas for Investment

#### ■ Increase the representation and retention of BIPOC students, faculty and staff by acting to remove systemic barriers to access and success.

The policies, procedures and practices that exist at Bentley have been shaped around the majority and follow an approach that values equality. The assumption in this approach is that what is good for the majority will serve everyone. This one-size-fits-all approach rarely serves those in minoritized communities and instead forces them to assimilate or conform to gain access to resources and opportunities. For example, despite the recognition that faculty and staff of color face unique barriers to advancing in their careers, Bentley does not have any formal mentoring or professional development activities targeting this group. The assumption is that the existing paths to success and the support provided to achieve it serve everyone equally, giving everyone an equal chance to advance. A more preferable approach to the creation of policies is to emphasize equity over equality. An equity approach recognizes that people are impacted by the system in different ways and adjusts practices and policies to promote and sustain proactive inclusion and equitable results rather than required assimilation into Bentley's dominant culture.

Bentley must begin to remove equality-based practices and policies and instead institute policies that are equity-minded, adapting to meet the needs of all identities. In our individual spheres of influence we need to begin asking these questions: *"Whose perspectives are not being heard?"*, *"Whose needs are not being addressed?"*; and *"Whose comfort are we prioritizing?"*. (Stewart, 2017) This process of intentional and difficult self-reflection and introspection will help Bentley begin to see and recognize where these social and institutional inequities exist on our campus, what we can do to address them and how we can change our systems, practices, and policies to ensure they do not happen again.

■ **Create safe spaces that affirm the identities and nurture the success of BIPOC communities on campus and add resources to support the mental health of BIPOC students.**

Spaces emerged as a major theme, as many BIPOC community members shared there was a lack of adequate space dedicated to and centered on the needs of BIPOC individuals. Although we believe Bentley aspires to be an anti-racist institution where bias and harassment do not exist, we know from the stories shared that racism, discrimination, and white supremacy culture are unfortunately present. Bentley must work to create dedicated safe spaces where BIPOC individuals can come to heal, find community and remain empowered on our campus. The mental health of our students is critical and we heard loud and clear a desire not only for physical spaces but dedicated resources directed at dealing with the stress of attending a HWI/PWI.

■ **Add symbolic representations of race to the campus. (art, statues, building names, etc.).**

The symbolic representations of communities of color is equally as important as the physical spaces. Campuses across the country are working to remove symbols of oppression that exist on their campuses, like changing building names and removing statues. As a young campus we do not have the same history of oppression baked into our structures; however equally important is that there are few spaces that work to affirm the identity of people of color in symbolic ways. There are no buildings named for people of color, or artwork or statues that honor or are created by BIPOC people at Bentley. For community members, this absence of expressions of racial diversity limit the ability of individuals to feel a sense of belonging. It also prevents us from signaling to visitors a value for different cultures and perspectives and instead centers whiteness. Creating and investing in spaces both physical and symbolic that affirm BIPOC people would be a proactive way of creating and communicating that we are a welcoming and inclusive community.

■ **Expand the impact of our operations to support the development of BIPOC communities outside of Bentley.**

The internal investments articulated here are essential, however, we also have an opportunity to maximize our impact by ensuring that a larger proportion of our partnerships and expenditures with external organizations are made with Black-and minority-owned firms. As a University we contract with several organizations to deliver services and products to our campus. In addition, we partner with many organizations to provide employment experiences for our students. We must do a better job of quantifying and tracking this spending and these partnerships to identify opportunities to expand our impact and increase the visibility of these firms as employers for our graduates.

## Strategic Priority: Invest in Intentional Anti-Racist Knowledge and Skill Development

### ASPIRATION STATEMENT

**A community where everyone is expected to participate in comprehensive curricular and professional development opportunities designed to increase individual racial consciousness, enhance capacity to engage in cross-racial interactions, and create a culture where authentic and brave conversations about race and racism are the cultural norm.**

The current racial crisis revealed the limited racial consciousness present in our community. In her 2018 book, *The Person You Mean To Be*, Dolly Chugh speaks to the need to move from being simply a “believer” to a “builder.” *Believing* in a racially just and equitable Bentley is not the same thing as *building* a racially just and equitable Bentley. We are a community primarily of believers not builders. This disconnect has prevented our ability to respond in the face of challenges to the existence of racism and has lulled us into thinking that because we believe in our values they will manifest in our culture. Now that we are more aware of the realities of our racial climate we have a duty to actively build our knowledge and practice the skills that will allow us to be effective advocates for change in all of our learning, living, and working environments.

We can point to a variety of opportunities to engage in individual learning about race in the curricular and co-curricular opportunities offered to students and professional development experiences offered to staff and faculty. These efforts are not required, often go unrecognized, and are never monitored. This lack of expectation or structure to support this development for students, faculty and staff has resulted in a community where many people have not engaged in active consideration of their racial identity much less how that identity has been formed or how it impacts their interactions with others. This lack of knowledge prevented people from seeing the ways that race manifests at the organizational level preventing deep considerations of systemic racism and how it shows up at Bentley. We need to create an expectation that everyone engages in multiple opportunities to understand their own racial identity and then ensure they feel equipped to act in ways that promote racial equity and justice in our community.

## Areas for Investment

■ **Ensure that all students (undergraduate and graduate) understand the impact of race, racism, and systemic racism in society and organizations by embedding persistent opportunities for learning and reflection in curricular and co-curricular experiences.**

Bentley’s mission is to educate the next generation of business leaders. If we fail to ensure that all of our graduates have examined their own racial identity; understand the social, political, and economic impact of race; and have developed skills to act in more intentionally anti-racist ways to reduce the impact of systemic racism we will not have achieved our goal. There are currently no mechanisms for ensuring that all graduates achieve these things. There are opportunities available through curricular and co-curricular options but there is neither a requirement nor a clearly articulated rationale for why students must engage in examinations of race and racism. As a University we will be left behind if we do not find ways to incorporate this commitment into the learning experience for all students, undergraduate and graduate, in more meaningful and comprehensive ways.

■ **Build capacity of all faculty and staff to understand and work in racially diverse organizations by embedding learning about race, racism, and systemic racism in all professional development and learning opportunities and recognizing and encouraging participation.**

The expectations for faculty and staff should mirror those for students. All employees of Bentley should be expected to regularly engage in capacity-building activities that enhance their ability to work in a racially diverse community. We must incentivize and hold individuals accountable for engaging in this kind of professional development. We also need to clearly articulate the reason for this investment. This is not a “nice to have” or only necessary for certain offices or departments, this is a key factor in our future success. Equipping and empowering all faculty and staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to support and mentor BIPOC students will also work to reduce the *current burden* being placed primarily on faculty and staff of color. In addition, developing the skills of all employees to interact effectively in cross-racial interactions with peers will allow us to harness the innovation and creativity that can result from diverse perspectives and experiences. These investments in the development of faculty and staff are one critical way to ensure we create a culture where everyone can thrive.

■ **Create more intentional spaces for brave engagement about race and social justice.**

Formal courses and professional development offerings are only one facet of building capacity for anti-racist action. Often individually focused, these opportunities do not always provide space for interpersonal knowledge and skill development. Anti-racism work must include the intentional connection between social justice and the personal lives of our community members. Bentley must begin to invest in developing more and greater spaces for brave engagement and dialogue focused on topics of race and racial identity. If we are not able to discuss our identities and how those identities impact our experiences with others, our learning simply remains in a space of theoretical practice. Anti-racism requires a personal commitment involving direct engagement with ourselves and others. Without the spaces to develop and practice these skills, our community will never be able to adequately respond to racist acts when they occur or to actively advocate for ourselves and others to ensure racial justice.

## Strategic Priority: Invest in the Institutionalization of Systems and Practices that Ensure Racial Justice and Equity

### ASPIRATION STATEMENT

**A community that ensures racial equity and justice through non-hierarchical decision-making processes, robust data collection and reporting requirements, and transparent accountability mechanisms that enable more data-driven and equity-minded decision making to promote more inclusive practices and policies.**

Equity is at the heart of ensuring accountability to our values of diversity and inclusion and our aspiration to become more anti-racist. While our value for Diversity speaks to the understanding that both representation and perspective positively influence the learning and working environment, and our commitment to Inclusion speaks to our desire to create a community where people feel they belong and can be authentic, a commitment to Equity is where we begin to move beyond values and statements and into action. *The USC Race and Equity Center* defines equity as:

*Understanding and deliberately meeting the particular needs of specific racial and ethnic groups; achieving parity in opportunity, performance, and wellness outcomes; correcting structures, systems, cultures, and policies that (re)produce racial stress and stratification; and fostering and sustaining environments that people across all racial and ethnic groups experience as fair, affirming, and inclusive.*

Equity provides the guide for ensuring that our intentions align with our actions. We have not created a culture that actively works to ensure this is achieved. We assume that if we are ok then everyone is ok. If no one is complaining everything must be fine. We cannot be complacent or put the expectation for raising or fixing issues on the backs of those most impacted. Equity is only achieved through persistent efforts connected to accountability structures. The events that precipitated the formation of the current Task Force reveal limited structures supporting these things. There are isolated efforts to address racial equity that primarily come in the form of supports for marginalized communities. There are no active efforts to discover racial equity gaps as few offices analyze their data to reveal these patterns. Data is often shared in aggregated ways for communities of color preventing the opportunity to discover patterns of inequity. Now is the time to address all of these factors to achieve our desired goal of racial equity.

### Areas for Investment

- **Develop an institutional racial equity plan by intentionally engaging in a continuous process to identify and close racial equity gaps in achievement and access and work to provide more access to data by creating a more robust reporting mechanism.**

To measure and shift the culture we need to commit to the creation of equity across the institution. We do not have a culture of data collection or reporting that informs our decision making. Equity is only achieved through persistent efforts to identify gaps, set targets and take meaningful action to close those gaps. Access to data and decision making is restricted at Bentley. In hierarchical systems like the one at Bentley, individuals with access to data have more power and restricting access keeps people ill-informed and unable to advocate in meaningful ways. We need to create more access to data by proactively collecting, disaggregating and then reporting data on race and other identity measures. In addition, we need to encourage use of this data to assess the impact of policies and practices on BIPOC communities rather than assuming what is good for the majority is good for all.

- **Engage in regular and consistent measurement of the climate for racial equity and justice and publicly report findings.**

The current cultural norms work to reinforce existing white supremacy (dominant) cultural values and behaviors. These cultural norms are allowed to operate without regular examination or scrutiny. We do not have a practice of comprehensive or regular measurement of our climate and culture for diversity, equity or inclusion which perpetuates a belief that we do not care and leaves those least impacted by the culture unaware of the true impact of the ways of being that are fully entrenched. A regular examination of the climate with clear reporting would provide meaningful data from which to take action. A comprehensive measure would reveal patterns across students, faculty, and staff and allow the University and individual divisions and departments to create targeted interventions. Combining quantitative with qualitative measures will also make the space for reflection and shared understanding around issues that emerge.

- **Review the current structure for reporting, investigating, and responding to incidents of discrimination, harassment and bias to ensure that it centers the affected individual not the institution.**

The stories we heard from the community reveal a lack of trust in the system and in the University to take action on issues of discrimination and harassment. The volume of previously unreported stories of racist behavior revealed through the @BlackatBentley Instagram account and the community forums and listening sessions demonstrate this lack of trust, which is being experienced on campuses *across the country*. To be truly anti-racist, we must ensure that individuals who experience racism have access to systems for reporting and support and that those who engage in this behavior are held accountable. Current systems are decentralized and require individuals who have experienced discrimination and harassment to adjust to our organizational structure. This centers the University rather than centering the individual who is experiencing harm. This approach also makes it easy to ignore patterns and to see incidents as isolated rather than representative of the larger cultural norms. We must work to adapt our systems so that they serve the needs of the individuals most impacted.



**The work of the Racial Justice Task Force marks an important evolution in our journey towards becoming anti-racist - but it is the collective actions and shared responsibility we take beyond the work of the Task Force that will truly determine our will to be an organization where racial justice is a reality, not just rhetoric.**

**Katie Lampley**

Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer

# 04

## The Path Forward

The power of the Racial Justice Task Force is that it reflected a large swath of the campus community allowing for a wide array of perspectives to be included in this process. This diversity can also be reflected in the expectations for the outcomes of this phase of our journey. The discoveries that resulted from this collective engagement may feel groundbreaking to some and elementary to others depending on your position at Bentley and where you began your journey. What the process has allowed and what this document creates is a common understanding of our culture and a vision of what can be. This document provides a reference point for those searching to make sense of the current context and find suggestions for how to take action.

Change does not begin when this document is released, and the Task Force completes its work. Change began the minute the Task Force started this journey — and will continue long after the Task Force has ended. The magnitude of the change is what is yet to be determined. Perfection is not the goal, but rather the strengthening of our resolve to continually push forward until we have achieved our vision for racial justice and equity. The ultimate impact of this work will be determined by two things: the degree to which individuals, groups, offices, and departments begin and sustain their own process of discovery that leads to action and the ability of the institution to resource and institutionalize structures that enable the implementation of the strategic priorities for investment.

The work we have done as a Task Force and will continue to do as a community directly supports our strategic commitment to *Inclusive Excellence*. As an institution we are striving for what AAC&U calls, Engaged Inclusivity — “a campus where inclusivity thrives through constant reflection, analysis, and accountability” by shifting our understanding of inclusion “from general acceptance and tolerance of difference to active institutional transformation, based on the belief that the richness of our culture is because of our diversity and a recognition of our common humanity” (AAC&U, 2019) While the Task Force limited our investigations to the impact of race on campus, any further action must be connected to our overall effort to provide a diverse, inclusive and equitable campus for all identity groups. We do not come to campus only as our racial selves but with a richness of our social identities and we must do more to embrace the intersectional nature of that reality. The recent racial reckoning demonstrates there is an urgent need to unmask and identify the way race has impacted our campus and we are confident that efforts to impact racial justice will create justice for all populations.

The kind of transformational change we are advocating for requires consistent, sustained, resourced, and recognized action. How will we ensure that these calls for change and suggestions for strategic investments are implemented and their impact monitored?

### Structures for Implementation

We must move as an institution from placing responsibility for addressing racism specifically, and diversity and inclusion more broadly, in the hands of volunteer groups and minoritized individuals. While we are grateful for the time and effort so many have invested in this process, we also recognize their efforts have not been connected to their current responsibilities but rather additions to their full-time work, teaching, and learning. For BIPOC community members this is compounded by the fact that they have already been performing unpaid and unrecognized service and emotional labor with increased calls by the community to educate and support peers around matters of race. In addition, these efforts are supplemental and not integral to the work being done across the divisions. While there must be campus-wide efforts, which are discussed below, much work remains to be done at the divisional level. Bentley must build capacity by creating more formal structures throughout the University that are charged, resourced, and equipped to handle these efforts and recognize the service of individuals who lead and support them.

All members of the community must be involved and have shared responsibility for the creation of a racially equitable and just campus. There is no way to identify all of the possibilities for action but the Task Force has created a list of suggested action items connected to each of the strategic priorities that we believe divisions, offices and organizations should actively consider for implementation. Those ideas are contained in the Strategic Priorities and Action Steps section of the Appendix, and we encourage members of the community to use them to guide their planning. The Task Force also recommends the following three steps be taken to ensure campus-wide efforts to drive systemic change continue beyond the Task Force.

## 1

### **CREATE** a formal campus-wide structure to facilitate the implementation of systemic efforts that impact the culture and to ensure that progress is monitored.

The Task Force recommends the creation of the **Inclusive Excellence Council**. Bentley has a Diversity Council, but that group does not have a formal charge or informal mission to impact equity and justice. We believe the establishment of an Inclusive Excellence Council with a specific charge from the President to advance the operationalization of our campus-wide efforts to advance our commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice would help to ensure the work of this Task Force begins to be actualized. The Council's charge would be to implement specific action items from the Task Force, detailed here, and identify additional opportunities for systemic investment in the creation of a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and just community. This group would be administered by and report directly to the Chief Diversity Officer, and be composed of staff and faculty who are appointed and recognized by their divisions as well as students and alumni who are connected to advisory groups that have been formed to ensure recognition and representation (i.e. Student Equity and Inclusion Consultants, Bentley Mosaic Alumni Council). An expectation would be set for annual public reporting to the community on progress and the groups should be resourced appropriately to achieve their objectives.

## 2

### **CHARGE** the Inclusive Excellence Council with the immediate implementation of the following action items connected to the strategic priorities identified in this document.

- Create a Racial Equity Workgroup and conduct an equity study that identifies racial equity gaps and develops institutional goals to close them. Report preliminary findings by the end of 2021.
- Solicit and award brave space mini-grants to encourage shared participation in the creation of opportunities for dialogue across differences. Award grants for projects starting in Fall 2021.
- Launch the University's first campus-wide climate study that includes quantitative and qualitative measures of racial climate. Provide results to campus by the end of 2021.

## 3

### **MONITOR** and publicly share progress with the campus to encourage transparency and ensure accountability.

- Collect and promote divisional efforts to address the strategic priorities identified by the Task Force and share best practices annually.
- Enhance the Inclusive Excellence Dashboard by identifying additional metrics that can be monitored and shared with the campus to enhance transparency and ensure progress.
- Host community update sessions once each semester to allow community members to voice concerns, learn about progress, and share feedback.

# Closing Statement

The Racial Justice Task Force is extremely proud of the work it has done to put Bentley on a path toward healing and restoration in the wake of a racial crisis in our nation's history. Our efforts to unearth and highlight many ways in which Bentley is not currently designed or empowered to support BIPOC individuals or anti-racist action and policies has been done from a place of wanting to make Bentley a stronger community. We have been inspired by this desire for change and believe that we are on the path to sustained efforts to achieve a more actively anti-racist climate and culture. Like most investments we recognize we will not see the returns right away. It is these quiet, seemingly dormant periods, when it is easy to believe nothing is happening or that progress has stalled. We are confident however that our careful consideration and engaged inquiry has placed us in a good position to realize meaningful and sustainable benefits for everyone in the community. Unlike a financial investment we have a lot of control over the conditions that will ultimately determine the success of these investments in our culture. However, it cannot happen without a real and continuing commitment from members of our community. The Racial Justice Task Force has brought these aspirations, areas for investment and proposed actions steps forward. It now falls to all of us, faculty, staff, students and alumni alike, to ensure these and other changes are made to ensure we are able to address our current shortcomings while finding and preventing future inequities from arising. We cannot continue to rely on "Band-Aid" solutions that simply gloss over or temporarily hide inequities existing on our campus. We must commit to the long-term, institutional change that will embed anti-racism into everything our University does and is.

The Task Force's work is complete but Bentley University's work to achieve racial equity and justice must continue on.



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*History isn't something you look back at and say it was inevitable, it happens because people make decisions ... those moments are cumulative realities.*

**Marsh P. Johnson**  
Performer and Activist

# Appendix

## Strategic Priorities and Action Steps

The Racial Justice Task Force discussed and collected several ideas about ways to take action to impact the three strategic priorities we identified. We offer this collection of Suggested Action Steps here as examples of ways that the University can take action to make progress as an institution. Some of these actions could be accomplished relatively quickly by a small group of people while others would require substantial resources over a long period of time. We offer this list as a kind of mosaic, in hopes that it will inspire the kind of organic and pervasive participation that is required to move this work forward. We encourage the community to read through the suggestions below to discover ideas they can implement or adapt to respond to the priorities for investment in their areas of influence. To achieve our aspirations we must all find ways to make an impact.

### Strategic Priority: Invest in Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Communities

**Aspiration Statement:** A community and a culture that truly values, respects, and empowers BIPOC voices and contributions and understands that for the University to thrive it must actively work to uncover and remove structural barriers preventing the full, equitable, and authentic engagement and sense of belonging of BIPOC individuals.

#### Areas for Investment

- Increase the representation and retention of BIPOC students, faculty and staff by acting to remove systemic barriers to access and success.
- Create safe spaces that affirm the identities and nurture the success of BIPOC communities on campus and add resources to support the mental health of BIPOC students.
- Add symbolic representations of race to the campus. (art, statues, building names, etc.).
- Expand the impact of our operations to support the development of BIPOC communities outside of Bentley.

#### Suggested Action Steps

- Increase the enrollment of Black students at Bentley.
- Make the current test-optional policy for undergraduate admissions permanent and implement a similar test optional policy for graduate admissions.
- Enhance institutional support for BIPOC students (including additional resources focused on financial and emergency aid, mental health and wellness, career and academic advising, and graduate student support)
- Explore the creation of a dedicated safe space for BIPOC students on campus.
- Increase the imagery that represents people of color throughout the campus with the installation of artwork or sculptures produced by BIPOC artists.
- Dedicate additional funding to support faculty cluster hiring targeting scholars in critical race studies.
- Offer targeted professional development and mentoring opportunities that address the unique challenges BIPOC staff and faculty face in advancement in higher education.
- Develop stronger connections to our BIPOC alumni to increase opportunities for mentoring of current students and recruitment of potential students.
- Quantify and enhance the level of investments made with BIPOC organizations (supplier diversity, university financial investments).
- Increase racial diversity on all panels and among speakers and guest lecturers.
- Increase the number of undergraduate and graduate internship and employment opportunities at minority-owned companies.
- Ensure outside consultants retained in implementing or advancing the suggestions from the Racial Justice Task Force are individuals or firms created and led by BIPOC individuals.
- Create a land acknowledgment statement that recognizes and honors the Indigenous Peoples who are the original stewards of the land Bentley currently occupies.

### Strategic Priority: Invest in Intentional Anti-Racist Knowledge and Skill Development

**Aspiration Statement:** A community where everyone is expected to participate in comprehensive curricular and professional development opportunities designed to increase individual racial consciousness, enhance capacity to engage in cross-racial interactions, and create a culture where authentic and brave conversations about race and racism are the cultural norm.

#### Areas for Investment

- Ensure that all students (undergrad and grad) understand the impact of race, racism and systemic racism in society and organizations by embedding persistent opportunities for learning and reflection about race in curricular and co-curricular experiences.
- Build capacity of all faculty and staff to understand and work in racially diverse organizations by embedding learning about race, racism and systemic racism in all professional development and learning opportunities and recognizing and encouraging participation.
- Create more intentional spaces for brave engagement about race and social justice.

#### Suggested Action Steps

- Integrate a required course into the undergraduate and graduate curriculum that explores the economic and societal impact of race.
- Integrate discussion of race, racism and systemic racism into campus-wide co-curricular activities, including Orientation, Service Learning and Career Preparation services.
- Require all academic departments to offer at least one course each semester that is specifically focused on race.
- Evaluate faculty annually on their efforts to develop and implement inclusive pedagogical practices in the classroom.
- Regularly and actively assess any course offerings that explore the economic and societal impact of race to ensure content is current, grounded and applicable to both academic research and current business and career trends.
- Suspend classes one day each academic year and require participation in workshops focused on social justice.
- Invest in the creation of a community of practice focused on racially conscious research and teaching.
- Expand Bentley Brave offerings to include more conversations about race.
- Invest in greater cross-department academic collaborations to ensure curriculum focused on race is grounded in multiple disciplines.
- Ensure training and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff are timely, consistent, tiered and developmentally progressive to develop a culture dedicated to consistent learning and engagement with topics and issues of race, racism and systemic racism.

### Strategic Priority: Invest in the Institutionalization of Systems and Practices that Ensure Racial Justice and Equity

**Aspiration Statement:** A community that ensures racial equity and justice through non-hierarchical decision-making processes, robust data collection and reporting requirements, and transparent accountability mechanisms that enable more data-driven and equity-minded decision making to promote more inclusive practices and policies.

#### Areas for Investment

- Develop an institutional racial equity plan by intentionally engaging in a continuous process to identify and close racial equity gaps in achievement and access and work to provide more access to data by creating a more robust reporting mechanism.
- Engage in regular and consistent measurement of the climate for racial equity and justice and publically report findings.
- Review the current processes for reporting, investigating and responding to incidents of discrimination, harassment and bias to ensure that it centers the affected individual, not the institution.
- Create a centralized accountability structure for reporting incidents of discrimination, harassment and bias.

## Suggested Action Steps

- Create a centralized system and process for reporting discrimination, harassment, and bias that is accessible to students, faculty, and staff. Ensure that reports are addressed immediately, that outcomes are reported to parties involved, and regularly communication is sent to the campus about the volume and type of racialized incidents as well as the types of sanctions that result.
- Begin to regularly administer a campus-wide climate survey that specifically assesses racial climate for faculty, staff and students and publically report all findings.
- Increase the collection, reporting, and access to disaggregated data by race for student, staff, and faculty access, retention, and outcomes measures.
- Add capacity to the Business Intelligence Office to support the collection, analysis, and reporting of diversity, equity, and inclusion data.
- Explore restorative justice approaches to address racial inequity on campus in line with AAC&U's Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) initiative.
- Create cross-functional equity teams to identify and address gaps in outcomes for different racial groups.
- Create structures like advisory groups of BIPOC community members and consult them before major decisions are made on campus.
- Embed racial equity activity into the performance, tenure, and promotion reviews for staff and faculty.



## Task Force Members

### Co-Chairs

Donna Maria Blancero, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs,  
Office of Provost & VP Acad Affairs  
Katie Lampley, Vice President and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer,  
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### Core Team

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Suzanne Dove, Executive Director, Badavas Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning,  
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Lindsay Rauch, Assistant Director, Marketing and Digital Strategy, Marketing and Communications

### Full Task Force

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Andrew Aylesworth, Associate Professor, Senate Chair and Department Chair, Marketing  
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Laura Bentley, Assistant Director, International Education, Cronin Office of International Ed  
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Michael Bravo, MBA, '94, Senior Lecturer, Management  
Erica Brown '93, Circulation Supervisor, Library  
Jill Brown, Professor, Management  
Pauline Carpenter, Leadership Gifts Officer, Development  
Alexia Chesbrough '24, Student, Undecided  
Michaela Clark '16, Infomercial Telemarketing Operations Analyst, SharkNinja  
Roland Clough '87, Restorative Facilitator, RYASAP  
Jacob Crane, Assistant Professor, English and Media Studies  
Ian Cross, Senior Lecturer, Marketing  
Mateo Cruz, Assistant Professor, Management  
Wiley Davi, Professor, English and Media Studies  
Darius Davis '16, Talent Acquisition Specialist, Human Resources  
Samir Dayal, Professor, English and Media Studies  
Johannes Eijmberts, Senior Lecturer and Director of the Valente Center, Global Studies  
Caitlin Elinson, Leadership Gifts Officer, Development  
Gregory Farber '03, Senior Lecturer and Director of the Writing Center, English and Media Studies  
Erin Flynn, Lecturer, Marketing  
Peter Forkner, Director, Counseling Center  
Trish Foster, Executive Director, Gloria Cordes Larson Center for Women and Business  
Jeffrey Foust, Jewish Chaplain, Spiritual Life Center  
Juliana Freire, Visual Designer, Marketing and Communications  
Anya Gelernt-Dunkle, Assistant Director, Graduate Admissions  
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William Kavanaugh '04, Head Coach, Football, Athletics  
Kathryn Keyes, Director, Housing and Residential Services, Residential Center  
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Jeffrey Livingston, Associate Professor and Gibbons Research Professor, Economics  
Kristin Livingston, Associate Director, Content Development, Advancement Communication  
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[bentley.edu/racial-justice-discovery-document](https://bentley.edu/racial-justice-discovery-document)

