



Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

NEWSLETTER

Updates

September 2023



Dear SMC community,

This end-of-year report (AY 2022-2023) highlights some of the ODEI diversity and inclusion-related initiatives and collaborations of this past year. Many of these initiatives were successful because of the expertise of key partners across campus, for which I am personally grateful.

During the past academic year, the AVP/Senior Diversity Officer:

1. **Supported and mentored faculty:** Worked with the Associate Provost of Faculty Affairs on a year-long Faculty Productivity Program. The program, developed and run by Dr. Fatimah Williams, helps faculty—particularly first-generation and BIPOC faculty—thrive, by teaching the techniques to balance scholarship, leadership, and well-being through targeted series of interactive workshops, resources, and monthly support. Our SMC cohort included support and mentoring for a total of twenty-five faculty that included: new faculty, new chairs, and mid-range/level faculty in leadership positions.
2. **Advanced knowledge of and support for students with disabilities:** coordinated with the Student Disabilities Services Office on two GUIDE tier 2 online workshops on

supporting neurodiverse students in the classroom. The first, "Top 10 tips (do's & don'ts) for faculty working with neurodiverse students", held in the fall semester had a total of 55 participants. The second workshop, "Inclusion in the Classroom: Facilitating a Neurodiverse Classroom," held in the spring semester, had a total of 24 participants. Dr. Mitran, the facilitator for both sessions also shared some resources with faculty as well.

3. **Cultivated a campus climate that enables all members of our community to understand and increase a sense of belonging:** Organized two GUIDE tier one cohorts in the spring of 2023 for a total of 27 total participants who completed the three 4.5-hour sessions. There are other 50 colleagues on the priority list for Fall 2023. As part of these efforts, the AVP/SDO revised and strengthened the infrastructure, partnership, and buy-in for the sustainability and future of GUIDE Tier 1.
4. **Set a strong foundation for a successful AVP/SDO search (please see 9/18/2023 email)**
Continued to establish a genuine and intentional infrastructure for the Office of DEI, working with VP for Mission and other senior leadership. This included advocating repeatedly and actively for administrative support, independent cost center with budget under the purview of the AVP/SDO, and hiring a graduate intern to support the office.
5. **Helped design the beginnings of an inclusive and equitable workload policy.** Please see [here](#) for an update.
6. **Fostered an inclusive community in which faculty and staff feel supported by:**
collaborating with the Office of Faculty Affairs on best practices for hiring on multiple searches, including SEBA, Director of the BSN program, HP Director;
Revised and updated standardization of job descriptions to include an expectation of a DEI statement for staff and faculty positions
Reviewed hiring protocols for faculty searches in collaboration with Faculty Affairs
Rewrote the faculty line request template filled out by departments for line requests, which is particularly important as SMC increases efforts for cluster hiring.
Created a FAQ for Faculty cluster hiring practices
Created a sample rubric template for faculty hiring
7. **Collaborated with the Chair of CCIE, the CCIE Committee, and its six working committees** to address the future of the AVP/SDO position and support DEI initiatives across the year, including the day long symposiums, speakers, workshops, and cultural celebrations. This included: Attending many student-led events like Día de los Muertos, Cultural Graduate Celebrations, Efflorescence Cultural Night Showcase, the ALLIPAS conference, 44 Days events, LGBTQIA+ events, CIRCLE religious diversity events, and SDS workshops
8. **Provided communication about DEI to the campus community and advocated for DEI at all levels of decision-making and initiatives. This involved:**
Sending out a semi-regular newsletter
Organizing DEI-related resources for the community
Advocating for Spanish-language marketing materials and bilingual websites or at minimum some engagement with Latinx students and their families on the new website.
Working with PIs of NEH Spotlight in the Humanities Grant
Inbox so that DEI is integrated as a core component of the project

9. **Served as an advocate and ally related to DEI for students, faculty, staff and the entire campus community by:**

Holding meetings and informal gatherings with student groups on campus

Holding regular drop-in office hours for faculty and staff

Working on the strategic plan

Cultivate relationships with the community in order to build trust and project stability

10. **Lead initiatives related to HSI-designated institutions in practice by:**

Beginning a summer reading group to discuss “Transforming Hispanic-Serving Institutions for Equity and Justice” by Dr. Gina Garcia in collaboration with the Vice Provost, Academic Success

Facilitating two summer reading group sessions

Reaching out to experts in the field of HSI, including Dr. García

Organizing a fall keynote speaker and workshop with Dr. Maribel Jiménez, in collaboration with the Office of the Provost.

As we continue to implement the institutional strategic plan and look forward to 2028, I want to make sure that we don't lose sight of where we've been in relation to centering DEI work at SMC and the reason why this position was created as integral to our liberal arts, Lasallian and Catholic mission.

I also want refer to the 3 letters written in summer 2020 from the BSU, BLM Committee, and Ethnic Studies Department that called for Saint Mary's to take concrete steps to improve its efforts at equity, inclusion and belonging. Collectively, these letters have come to be known as the “List of 20 Demands for Campus-wide Racial Justice.” Many of those who have been here long enough may remember that the activism in 2020 is part of a long history of students and others in the community holding the college accountable for living out its mission, especially around DEI.

There is so much more work to do. In my time as interim, it is abundantly clear the need for a position like this that is integrated into the organization, has autonomy, and is empowered to move on initiatives, and serves as a key partner with all segments of the college.



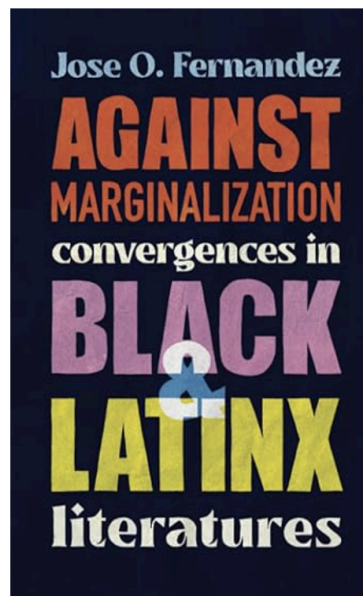
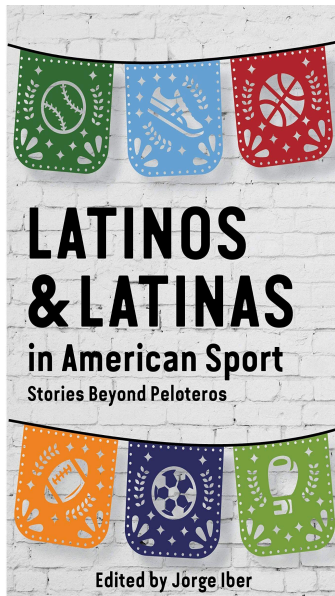
I want to point the community to the 14 day Writing Challenge held by the [National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#). The NCFDD provides professional development, training, and a mentoring community of faculty, postdocs, & graduate students from over 450 colleges and universities. Saint Mary's has an institutional membership and faculty are encouraged to sign up [here](#)!



One way to engage the college community in thoughtful dialogue and reflection to advance our commitment to diversity and inclusion is to share resources. I'd like to highlight a few resources:

1. A list of inclusive restrooms on campus can be found [here](#).
2. A [campus accessibility map](#) that shows parking, ramps, and elevators throughout the campus.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion is setting up a repository of resources related to diversity, access, equity and inclusion. The community can contribute by sharing [here](#).



I want to highlight the ways the campus is centering the voices of communities of color by sharing out events, done by members of our community. Please check out a [link](#) to the books from the collection that encompasses Latinx and Hispanic authors curated for Latinx Heritage Weeks.



From Sharon Sbotta:

We will have a screening of 'A Song for Cesar' at 7pm in LeFevre Theatre on September 27, 2023--followed by a moderated discussion with Professor Myrna Santiago. This event is brought to you by the Center for Women & Gender Equity in partnership with Women's & Gender Studies, History , Performing Arts, Campus Safety, Residential Experience and the Intercultural Center. To RSVP Click [here](#).

For more information, or for ADA accommodations, contact Sharon Sobotta at ssobotta@stmarys-ca.edu or at **925-631-4171**

Sincerely,

María Luisa Ruiz, Ph.D. [\[she/her\(s\); yo,ella\(s\)\]](#)
Senior Diversity Officer, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Professor of [Spanish and Latin American Studies \(SaLAS\)](#)

Black Lives Matter | PRIDE | Dreamers Welcomed | AAPI Ally

Please send your [Resources](#) for future newsletters. All resources will be submitted anonymously (unless you prefer to self identify)