

*Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee Meeting
February 11, 2022 - 12-1:30pm on Zoom*

Dennis Mitchell, Executive Vice President for University Life and Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement, welcomed the group and began by providing background on the origins of Inclusive Public Safety at Columbia, and the charge as set forth by President Bollinger, of the committee.

Charge of the Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee

The Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee's charge is to provide guidance to Public Safety on how to enhance their practices and policies and further foster an inclusive and equitable campus community.

The Committee, which includes Public Safety representatives, will discuss issues of importance to the Columbia community and make recommendations that support inclusion and belonging on Columbia's campuses.

Public Safety will work in partnership with the Advisory Committee to obtain information about campus sentiment and also review intended policy and practice changes to ensure that they are in alignment with the University's stated commitments to safety and anti-racism.

The goal of the Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee is to create meaningful and sustainable change, share perspectives and develop solutions together. Executive Vice President Mitchell also discussed the parameters for what the group is accountable for:

- Looking at policies and practices that can foster truly inclusive public safety across Columbia's Campuses for all
- Advising University leadership as needed during their search for a VP for Public Safety takes place in coming months, specifically
 - Meet with search firm and participate in a focus group to provide input in the search, and
 - Have an opportunity to meet with finalists and share thoughts with the search advisory committee
- Creating a transparent, public-facing report about the Advisory Committee's work

and for what the group is not responsible for:

- Serving as an oversight Board for Public Safety

Josef Sorett, Professor of Religion and African and African American Diaspora Studies, and Chair of the Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee, framed the guidelines for the committee's conversations/work:

- Challenge the idea, not the person
- Speak from your own experience (not for others)
- Listen to learn; bring your curiosity

- Share air time

The Advisory Committee then began introductory conversations that detailed hopes for the work of the committee, including:

- Working collaboratively to keep community safe and create a space that is inclusive of all on our campuses.
- Supporting enhanced communications across campus between Public Safety and the community.
- Acting as facilitators for an inclusive environment on campus
- Understanding perspectives of the administration, campus community, and members of the local/Morningside and Washington Heights communities and fostering those conversations
- Effectuating meaningful change on issues of importance related to inclusion on campus related to Public Safety
- Focusing on what Public Safety is doing right and what can be improved
- Continuing/moving forward the work of the working group
- Listening and sharing experiences of the Columbia community with Public Safety

The Advisory Committee broke into small group sessions to continue a more specific dialogue about learnings from the [Inclusive Public Safety Working Group report](#). The discussion focused on three central questions:

1. What was surprising about the findings of the report from the Inclusive Public Safety Working Group?
2. What did you learn from the dialogue?
3. What did you think was missing?

The following is a consolidated list of themes/items that emerged from the conversation:

Understanding Public Safety's role at Columbia

- Public Safety provides critical services for the Columbia community and that they intersect with every dimension of campus, which makes it even more important that they are on the front line of fostering inclusion on our campuses
- Recognizing Public Safety Officers, many of whom emerge from disenfranchised communities and contribute to the diversity of our campus are also humanized and included. We do not want to reinforce an "us" versus "them" approach
- Public Safety already does a lot to support inclusion, but there are important areas that need to be focused on.
- We can't achieve markers in life without a solid foundation. Columbia must be a solid-safe-secure community in order to fulfill our academic mission. Public Safety is at the foundation the University.
- Understanding the difference/separation between CU/TC/Barnard and other Public Safety units in the area

- Understanding staffing and resources for Public Safety better, including division of staff between employees and contract guards
- Articulating the Difference Between Public Safety and the NYPD
 - The community to remember that Public Safety is not the NYPD - that relationship should be clarified
 - Perceptions of NYPD can impact perceptions of Public Safety (not understanding the difference between them)

Better Communications/Clearing Misperceptions

- There are misperceptions about Public Safety within the wider community – and there needs to be more efforts to educate the broader community
- Greater need for articulation between the differences between contract guards and full-time Public Safety guards
- Surprising how much people do not know about Public Safety and the number of misconceptions that exist
- Misinformation/lack of awareness - there is a need to foster a more collaborative environment, multidirectional learning and conversations
- There exists a tension between feeling safe versus being objectively safe (navigating the difference)

Following Up on Working Group Recommendations

- Flesh out the recommendations made by working group and understand what is achievable in the short-term, medium-term
- Strong commitment to this work from the working group's recommendations, in order to make meaningful/actionable change
- Recognizing that this is long-term community-building work that we hope to sustain
- Need to understand the nature and frequency of various incidents to be able to identify specific points of contact with public safety that need attention more immediately, i.e., mental health crises.

Public Safety in Relation to Mental Health and Inclusion

- Community must understand the impact of calling Public Safety and what happens when the call is made in order to mitigate negative responses
- Importance of de-escalation especially in mental health crises. For example, understanding the psychological impact of uniforms that evoke the police.
- Potential use of mental health counselors/crisis intervention teams (in other institutions)
- Importance of gender and sexuality in these conversations (more emphasis has been on race and ethnicity) - trainings re: interactions with LGBTQ community

The Advisory Committee also discussed the logistics of the group (2 year terms for students and 3 year terms for faculty/staff). The committee will meet monthly for 75 minutes on Fridays , and there may be pre-work and/or email work in between meetings.

The final part of the meeting was spent focusing on the historical work of the Inclusive Public Safety Working Group, including the definition of Inclusive Public Safety. Professor Sorett turned to the history of Inclusive Public Safety, which began with President Bollinger's commitment to anti-racism, followed by the formation of the working group and a provisional report was produced. The Advisory Committee was a key recommendation of the working group. Today's meeting is a first step to move forward with the working group's recommendation and the primary goal is laying the foundation for the long-term work of the Advisory Committee.

Professor Sorett shared the working definition of Inclusive Public Safety, stated it remains a working definition, and invited advisory committee members to continue to review and share feedback on it.

Inclusive Public Safety is Columbia University's commitment to ensure that the work done to protect the safety of all on our campuses is carried out in a way that:

- treats every person with dignity and respect
- takes a proactive approach to addressing racism, including specialized efforts to counter racial profiling, disparities in treatment and all forms of bias
- recognizes that some members of Columbia's diverse community, including those who are African American, Afro Latinx, or from other Black communities, along with Indigenous people and other people of color, may have heightened concerns about Public Safety operations, based on experiences with and concerns about race-related profiling, abuses of power and violence by law enforcement
- acknowledges that different communities have varying needs in relationship to safety and feeling safe on campus
- responds thoughtfully and effectively to these concerns

Executive Vice President Mitchell closed the meeting and stated the next meeting will be held on Friday, March 25, 2022.