

RACISM, RESPONSE, AND RENEWAL: 2016 MassArt Artists of Color Demands and 2021 Updates

INTRODUCTION

Over the past five years on the MassArt campus, there has been an intense focus on issues of racial justice and equity that has evolved through community participation and engagement, and a two-year strategic planning process. We have been resolute in our efforts to make meaningful change as we advance the MassArt mission of shaping the next generation of artists, designers and art educators.

Through the strategic planning process, titled [“Our Vision for the Future,”](#) we created a collective, shared vision that reflects our values and defines the work of the College in the years to come. This summary shares the significant progress we have made as a community toward this vision.

In the spring of 2016, the [Artists of Color Union \(AOC\)](#) came to MassArt administrative leaders with a set of demands, specific initiatives and actions that they wanted the College to commit to, in order to create a more welcoming and accessible campus environment. Many of the concerns were not new and had been recurring on lists for decades; some were raised by students who are now alumni who work at MassArt.

Those AOC demands were discussed and debated at length, then developed into plans that ultimately became a set of actions that have been undertaken by College leaders, faculty, and staff in partnership with students. Although the events of 2016 had a very public dimension, the changes they put in motion have happened steadily but quietly. Sometimes systemic change can be as slow and unnoticed as the detrimental systems it dismantles. Students, faculty and staff were heard and we want to celebrate the steps taken and acknowledge that there are many more ahead on this path to equity and an anti-racist campus.

We have made much progress, and there remains much work to be done. Addressing historical inequities will take time and we are moving in the right direction, as indicated in our ALAANA faculty hires from 2019. This was a good year, but we also realize we still have a long way to go. We are sharing this data to demonstrate that we are being reflective and transparent about our progress.

In 2018-2019, Commissioner Carlos Santiago made closing graduation gaps for students of color one of the many initiatives in the Department of Higher Education’s [Equity Agenda](#) for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Board of Higher Education approved MassArt’s strategic plan in 2019, noting that its focus on a just and equitable learning environment aligned with the state’s educational agenda. This

alignment set the priorities for MassArt's first year of implementing our campus-wide strategic plan and it continues to guide us.

Fighting racism cannot be done by one person, one initiative, one policy, or one program. Our hope is that every one of us at MassArt can respond to this important challenge for ourselves, and to realize our strength as a community in this work.

Having achieved this level of progress, and as we look toward the MassArt 150th Anniversary in 2023, we are eager to hear from current students, along with faculty and staff, what they see as priorities for the next five years. We will be reaching out in the near future to begin gathering their ideas for the ways we can continue to move forward, as a community, to a more just and equitable learning and working environment.

We appreciate the community's ongoing engagement and support as we continue this important work together.

Kymberly Pinder, Ph.D.
Acting President

Lyssa Palu-ay
Dean, Office of Justice, Equity and Transformation

DIVERSITY PLAN AND ADMINISTRATION

1. Creation of Diversity Council and Mirror Governing Committee

The Diversity Council and Mirror Committee, made up of students, faculty and staff met several times throughout the 2016-2017 academic year. Beginning by addressing the Artists of Color Union demands, the issues addressed in these meetings and retreats evolved into the work of the strategic planning committee. These working groups made a significant contribution to both catalyze and advance MassArt's progress toward creating a just, compassionate, and equitable learning environment.

The strategic planning process that began in the summer of 2017 surfaced the realization that one or two committees focused on "diversity" were not enough. Rather we would aspire to have "Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI)" be the guiding principles at the core of our plan, aspiring to infuse them in all of the areas. JEDI was our "building code" from which would gauge and guide our work.

2. Recruiting material accurately reflect student, faculty and staff populations regarding underrepresented groups.

Starting with the 2016-2017 recruiting cycle, the Admissions and Marketing teams have focused on using an appropriate proportion of images of BIPOC or

“underrepresented groups” in all [recruitment materials](#), as well as on the MassArt.edu website and in posts to the College’s social media platforms. As discussed with the AOC members, we strive to present the composition of the student body accurately, but in an aspirational way, to encourage prospective BIPOC students to feel welcome at MassArt. The percentage of ALANA students in each incoming class is also cited in the annual viewbook and on the website, as reported in IPEDS data. A diverse [Admissions team](#) is dedicated to assisting all prospective students with learning about the MassArt student and through the application process.

3. Expansion of the Civil Rights, Compliance and Diversity Office.

This office was expanded and evolved into the [Office of Justice, Equity and Transformation \(JET\)](#) in January 2019. Led by Dean Lyssa Palu-ay, the office now employs two full-time staff and five [JET student leaders](#), who provide outreach and support to their peers and critical feedback to the College on campus life, school policies and curriculum. The JET Office is focused on transforming campus culture through initiatives such as [Anti-Racism Dialogues](#), which are meant to increase our capacity to have courageous conversations about race and racism; **Thriving Classrooms**, a series of workshops aimed at building community and collaboration between departments; and supporting multiple [affinity groups](#) on campus. JET also aligns [pathway programs](#) that create access and opportunity for first generation students from historically marginalized groups, supporting [Artward Bound](#) with two full time staff, and [Compass](#) with five faculty are assigned to support the programs.

MassArt is committed to maintaining safe and healthy learning, living, and working environments that are free from all forms of discrimination and harassment. In addition to the work of the JET team, the **Executive Director of Equal Opportunity, Title IX and Compliance** has managed compliance in these areas since April 2020.

4. Revision of existing policy addressing racism with Diversity Council and Mirror Governing Committee.

The Diversity Council and its attendant Mirror Governing Committee were active in the 2016-2017 academic year, and since then the intent of this charge has been alive and well at MassArt, evolving its reach beyond these two envisioned committees into a campus-wide commitment to JEDI, as detailed throughout the strategic plan and creation of the JET Office, as described above.

5. Address MAC Board photo controversy [in which a POC had been cropped out of a photo posted to social media].

This was addressed in 2016; a meeting was held with MAC members and any community members who wanted to be present to discuss what had happened, how and why it happened and to discuss the impact of the incident on the

community. In addition, at the following Fall leadership training, there was a session on being socially responsible when posting to social media.

CURRICULUM, FACULTY, AND STAFF

1. Develop a more inclusive curriculum.

- In February 2021, Dean of Faculty James Mason and JET Dean Lyssa Palu-ay joined the academic chairs meeting to discuss the progress toward creating a more inclusive curriculum, as requested in the AOC demands submitted to Provost Ken Strickland in March 2016. While there has been some progress in diversifying the curriculum, it has not moved quickly enough from the students' perspective. James then acknowledged Black History month and asked that each of the chairs report back at the March 2021 chairs meeting what their departments have done in response to the AOC demands.
- For the Fall 2021 first-year History of Art (HART) requirement, surveys of global art will be offered as additional options with the Western Art survey.
- In 2019, MassArt implemented a [Chosen Name policy](#), offering students the opportunity to use names other than the ones assigned at birth to identify themselves, as well as the preferred pronoun a student provides.
- In fall 2017, MassArt began test-optional admissions. SAT/ACT scores are no longer a factor in admissions decisions or the awarding of merit scholarships. Roughly 88% of applicants choose not to submit standardized test scores.
- Studio Pre-Semester is an intensive 10-day program designed to jump start and strengthen students' art-making skills, introduce students to campus life, and support student success in freshman year. Beginning in summer 2018, the College began offering the program at no cost to qualifying students; as of summer 2020, the program has been offered remotely to any Foundation student who is interested, and credit is awarded.
- MassArt is the newest partner in the **Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI)** Program. MAICEI is a grant-funded initiative aimed at providing students (ages 18-21) who receive services and supports under labels of intellectual disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorder an inclusive college experience.
- In Spring 2020, 45 faculty/staff and 23 students engaged in [Anti-Racist Critique Learning Community](#).

- In Spring 2021, Communication Design and Photography departmental teams are engaged with [Agency](#) in a student-centered approach to creating a more equitable experience for students of color. MassArt received [\\$100,000 from the Lumina Foundation for this work](#) and other professional development and curricular interventions to dismantle systemic barriers to student success and degree attainment, particularly for Black and Latinx students.
- In 2019, Studio Foundation, Liberal Arts and 3D faculty members participated in a [Making Being](#) workshop with teaching tools that create more cultural equity in arts spaces.

2. Mandatory hiring of faculty and staff of color throughout the institution.

The information in the chart below was compiled from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts data warehouse. Employees do not always identify their race in the hiring process, which means that these numbers could be higher. Moving forward, our commitment is to effectively and consistently track this information for both faculty and staff. Recent investments in technology, such as the transition to Evision Argos and Ellucian Analytics, will assist us in reporting and analyzing data more effectively.

- In 2020 the process for hiring temporary faculty was revised so that the search process is now more inclusive, equitable, and involves more voices in the decision.
- Since 2016, 20 full-time faculty of color have joined MassArt.
- In 2019-2020 alone, five African American and two Latinx faculty members were hired for tenure-track positions.
- Diversity statements are now a consistent part of application requirements.

	1/2/2021		1/7/2017		Change	
Ethnicity	Count	% of Total	Count	% of Total	Count	% of Total
Asian	22	5.9%	12	3.1%	10	2.8%
White	208	55.5%	219	55.7%	-11	-0.3%
Black/African American	45	12.0%	46	11.7%	-1	0.3%
Hispanic/Latino	31	8.3%	31	7.9%	0	0.4%
Not Specified	68	18.1%	85	21.6%	-17	-3.5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	0.3%	0	0.0%	1	0.3%
Total	375	100%	393	100%	-18	0%
	1/2/2021		1/7/2017		Change	
Gender	Count	% of Total	Count	% of Total	Count	% of Total
F	195	52.0%	180	45.8%	15	6.2%
M	179	47.7%	212	53.9%	-33	-6.2%
U	1	0.3%	1	0.3%	0	0.0%
Total	375	100%	393	100%	-18	0%

3. Anti-racism and cultural competency training to be encouraged for faculty, administrators and BOT.

- Currently 32 administrators and Board of Trustee members are participating in the [Cultural Equity Learning Community \(CELC\)](#), a comprehensive online program developed for arts and culture leaders committed to building racial justice and equity in the arts, which started in Summer 2020 and continues through the 2020-2021 academic year.
- As of September 2020, a total of 40 community members have participated in the “**Undoing Racism**” workshop presented by the [People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond \(PISAB\)](#).
- The Opening Day Spring 2020 theme was “**Building a Respectful Workplace**,” a presentation centered on author Brené Brown’s book “Braving: The Seven Elements of Trust.”
- In August 2020, members of the [Board of Trustees](#) participated in a “**Culture and Compliance**” training session presented by the MassArt Office of Compliance and the Office of Justice, Equity and Transformation.
- The “**Anti-Racism Dialogues**” white affinity group was established in Summer 2020 and has been meeting on a regular basis with the support of the JET office; currently 55 faculty and staff are engaged in these ongoing dialogues.
- In November 2019, 2 President’s Cabinet members, 1 faculty and 2 students attended the 2019 AICAD Symposium and presented a session

titled **"Making and Remaking Our Work with Inclusive Pedagogy: Notes From Our Practice."**

- In March 2019, faculty, staff and students participated in MassArt Day **"Past, Present & Future of Representation & Critique in Art and Design Education"** co-presentation by MassArt Academic Affairs, Office of Justice, Equity and Transformation and students.
- In September 2018, 5 President's Cabinet members, 4 faculty, and 2 staff members attended the [Race & Pedagogy National Conference](#), and presented a session titled **"Catalyzing Change: Anti-Racism Efforts at a Public Art College."**

4. Evaluation of faculty regarding cultural competency.

Thriving Classrooms is a series of workshops aimed at building community and collaboration between departments. Resources are provided to navigate issues impacting students in the classroom, studios, and beyond where everyone can thrive. Workshops are open to all MassArt faculty and staff.

Past workshops include:

- Upstander Training with True Story Theater
- Trauma Informed Classrooms: Mental Health Awareness
- Inclusive Facilitation for the Classroom
- Culturally Entering the Virtual Space
- Building Community in a Virtual Space
- Gender and Identity

CAMPUS AND RESIDENCE LIFE

1. More programs re POC issues and concerns for faculty, staff, and students to attend; and an explanation of the Adderley Lecture Series.

- Student Leadership Development is centering social justice in all of its student leader recruitment and training. Social Justice Seminars remain at the core of addressing race/racism and white privilege. Resident Assistants (RAs) and students are involved in participating, engaging, and reflecting on experiences to enhance their awareness and skill set in JEDI (justice, equity, diversity and inclusion) principles.
- The **"Inclusive Facilitation Training"** 2-day intensive workshops on engaging conversation about diversity, racism, bias, privilege, and power were held in Fall 2020, Fall 2019 and Fall 2018. On average ~25 students participate each time it's offered. Students then have the opportunity to implement their learning through facilitation of Anti-Racism Dialogue programs.

- **“Facilitating Courageous Conversations”** workshops were conducted for MassArt Art Museum (MAAM) museum attendants in Spring 2020, and for Primers and Resident Assistants (RAs) in Fall 2020.
- **Virtual affinity group hangouts for students** were established in Fall 2020 and meet on a weekly basis: [BIPOC](#), [LGBTQ+](#), and [International](#). The JET office is focused on providing spaces for student affinity groups to connect and build community. Student Engagement has been collaborating with JET Student Leaders to create a structure for affinity groups that better meets the needs of BIPOC and queer students.
- [BIPOC Community Gatherings](#) have also been taking place bi-weekly since fall 2020 for the larger BIPOC community (faculty, staff, students, and alumni).
- The MAC Board increased diverse programming and is also collaborating with JET on some additional programming focused on the topics of justice and equity, as well as highlighting POC artists/voices.

Beginning in the 2016-2017 academic year, the genesis of the [Adderley Lecture Series](#), created by the faculty to honor Tyrone Maurice Adderley, has been shared with the audience in opening remarks at each lecture. In addition, an archive of the Adderley featured speakers appears on the MassArt website to demonstrate MassArt’s commitment to increasing recognition of multiple viewpoints and the presentation of artists outside the mainstream.

2. **More gender-neutral bathrooms.**

There are now 28 gender-neutral restrooms located throughout the MassArt campus, which are single-stall and can be used by anyone regardless of sex, gender identity or gender expression.

3. **More elevators and ramps in South and Collins buildings, to fulfill campus ADA code requirements.**

As of November 2020, with the completion of the South Hall and MassArt Art Museum (MAAM) renovation, there is now an elevator that serves both the South and Collins buildings, along with new accessibility ramps and entrances designed to meet ADA code requirements.

4. **More POC staff in Residential Life, Counseling and Wellness and other areas of Student Development/services; more programming re POC and social justice issues.**

In addition to the programming described in #1 above:

- For the past three years, professional staff members have identified as other than white; currently both Residence Directors (RDs) are POC.

- Since 2014, at least 20% of the Resident Assistants (RA) staff (4-5 of 22-24) have identified as other than white.
 - Created a new position in the Counseling and Wellness Center to work in partnership with JET and the Compass program on justice and equity outreach.
 - Every year, the Student Development team attempts to have a diverse group of Counseling interns.
5. **Provide more support and respect for community members whose first language is not English.**
- In July/August 2020, we held four bilingual COVID-19 information sessions hosted by Human Resources, during overnight and morning staff shifts. More translated Human Resources materials are now available.
 - In 2020, Counseling and Wellness launched **My SSP**, an app that provides free multilingual 24/7 remote mental health and wellbeing support to students.
6. **Public Safety to remain unarmed.**
- At its February 2019 meeting the MassArt Board of Trustees voted to maintain the college's current policy of employing an unarmed campus police force. The vote was taken following the College's convening of a Campus Safety Working group that reviewed extensive research, consulted national experts in college campus safety, and held multiple open forums and surveys to gather input from students, faculty and staff. We continue to implement the comprehensive measures approved by the Board to further ensure the safety of our campus community.
 - In 2018, in response to African American staff and faculty concern about Public Safety email alerts being perceived as targeting African American men of color, the practice of using the subject line "Public Safety Alert" was changed to "Community Safety Notice."

ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES FROM THE MASSART STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2023: "OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE ANNUAL REPORT 2020

- In a first-of-its-kind partnership, MassArt and the City of Boston were awarded \$1.2 million over three years from the SURDNA Foundation for a regranting program entitled [Radical Imagination for Racial Justice \(RIRJ\)](#). MassArt stewards these funds to Boston area artists of color seeking to advance racial

justice through collaborative projects in their communities. MassArt is the only institution of higher education involved in the national cohort of eleven award recipients.

- In Spring 2021, a Graduate Programs **Vision Scholarship** was created to support students who are financially and academically deserving, and who demonstrate the potential to make a significant contribution to society through art and design. Preference will be given to students from underrepresented groups who contribute to Mass Art's commitment to the inclusion of diverse perspectives and voices.
- The **Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Fund**, offered through the JET Office, is a student-led initiative to provide financial support to MassArt students in their studio art practice, senior degree and thesis projects to assist in their successful completion of their degree and ensure their contributions are reflected in our society. The BIPOC fund will support students from these underrepresented and underserved groups during their senior year to assist them in their successful completion of their degree and ensure their contributions are reflected in our society. It was established during the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement following the death of George Floyd in May 2020.
- The MassArt Art Museum (MAAM) is establishing **MAAM Catalyst Fellowships**, a scholarship program for MassArt BIPOC undergraduate students who are considering futures in museums. MAAM Catalyst Fellows will be paid an hourly wage and receive an additional stipend. They will work with MAAM staff to realize exhibitions and programs, be offered mentorship by BIPOC arts leaders, and have special opportunities for leadership and professional training. The goal is that with time, MAAM Catalyst Fellows will continue their professional lives in the museum field and help create a more inclusive, anti-racist, and anti-colonialist museum culture.
- **Pathways:** MassArt was awarded \$46,075 for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Dual Enrollment Partnership grant program (CDEP), which provides an opportunity for high school students in the Artward Bound program to earn college credit and ease their transition from high school to college. Artward Bound is a free, four-year college access program that prepares 9-12th grade Boston students interested in art and design with the artistic, academic, and life skills needed to thrive in college. Participating students gain an early college experience and for low-income or first-generation college-goers, this might be their first exposure to college. Artward Bound hopes to explore more dual enrollment opportunities through the ProArts Consortium, an association of seven Boston-area colleges dedicated to the visual and performing arts. MassArt was also awarded early college grant funding to partner with two specific Boston public high schools to offer entry-level college courses to their students. However, MassArt's specialization does not meet the DHE's early college grant criteria, and we are now working together to expand dual enrollment for these two schools in alternative ways.

- In Fall 2020, MassArt implemented a **Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy**, which ensures that all students have access to the technology needed to be successful in their year/major, and could access financial aid to assist in the purchase of their device. Technology also initiated a **site-wide license purchase of Adobe Creative Cloud** to support current student and faculty use for creative projects, mitigating disparities in individual resources to afford a personal license. Adobe products are widely used throughout the curriculum, and student access to Adobe was previously limited to on-campus rooms and labs. The new campus license creates equity for students, regardless of their individual ability to pay for Adobe applications on their own, and enhanced remote learning capabilities.