

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCE

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd by police and ensuing nationwide protests, college and university presidents have issued statements re-affirming their commitment to advancing equity for Black students, faculty, and staff, as well as other community members of color. Many leaders have used these communications as an opportunity to explicitly acknowledge a legacy of systemic racism and state that Black Lives Matter. In addition, many presidents have set forth concrete actions to address systemic racism and build anti-racist campus communities in the weeks, months, and years to come.

Based on a review of all 131 ATI presidents' statements between **May 29** and **June 25**, this guide offers a set of eight themes drawn from the full array of their proposed commitments and actions:

1. **Place an explicit focus on naming and addressing systemic racism**
2. **Offer concrete actions that advance anti-racism**
3. **Leverage the power of the presidential bully pulpit**
4. **Assume accountability for the results of anti-racist efforts**
5. **Commit to increased representation of Black students**
6. **Prioritize improved representation of Black faculty**
7. **Acknowledge institutions' historical associations with racism**
8. **Re-engage with campus and local police departments**

In their statements, most ATI presidents and chancellors acknowledged institutional racism within their own systems and structures and many offered tangible commitments to address these issues.

However, few presidents explicitly addressed the need to increase the number of students and faculty members of color on their campuses as part of their commitments.

As institutions devise the action plans that meet the forcefulness of their statements on racial equity, we strongly encourage them to put student and faculty diversity at the forefront of these efforts.

For questions about this resource, or other items in the ATI communications toolkit, please contact Adam Rabinowitz at Adam.Rabinowitz@aspensite.org.

THEME ONE: PLACE AN EXPLICIT FOCUS ON NAMING AND ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC RACISM

Many presidents used their platform to name the issue of systemic racism and underscore their plans to address it as a core institutional priority. By naming this commitment as a standard for all members of the campus community to follow, presidents provided the encouragement senior leaders, staff, and faculty needed to develop, and invest in, efforts designed to pursue racial equity.



In his statement, which is available [here](#), Chancellor Gallagher noted the link between systemic racism and injustice experienced by Black communities. He challenged his campus to confront the lack of fairness in its systems and structures and used this acknowledgment as pretext for pausing (and resetting) a nearly complete five-year strategic planning process to ensure it explicitly addresses racial equity.

Chancellor Gallagher outlined the following commitments in his statement:

- “This is also a time to turn the lens inward and consider our institution’s own role in perpetuating unfair structures and systems...”
- “Because of this, I am putting our nearly complete strategic planning process—which aims to chart Pitt’s course over the next five years—on hold. This pause will give us time to incorporate specific strategies to strengthen our commitments to racial equity and justice.”



In her statement, which is available [here](#), President Patton recognized the work that still remains to root out systemic racism and achieve equity on Middlebury’s campus. Beyond this acknowledgment, she urged individuals at all levels of the campus community to collectively share the burden of realizing the institution’s anti-racist ideals.

President Patton offered the following reflections from her statement:

- “We are far from our goal of being an anti-racist institution. We have a great deal to do. We are committed to that work and we understand that this must engage the entire institution.”
- “First, the Senior Leadership Group will be open to meeting three times a semester with representatives from Black student organizations & their allies from cultural organizations who joined in solidarity to voice their concerns. Second, we will collaborate with student representatives on the College Board of Advisors to ensure that their voices and concerns are featured prominently and regularly in every agenda.”

THEME TWO: OFFER CONCRETE ACTIONS THAT ADVANCE ANTI-RACISM

In addition to statements that denounce systemic racism, many presidents used the current moment as an opportunity to explain the need for anti-racist programs and actions to trustees, senior leaders, and the entire campus community. In addition to dedicating resources, presidents cited other efforts to change the student and faculty experience by, for example, critically examining and re-designing curricula, programs of study, and professional opportunities.



President Somerson positioned her statement, which is available [here](#), as an opportunity to reinforce the institution's strategic focus on building a just society. She outlined a series of additional programs and efforts that their Center for Social Equity and Inclusion will commit to this fall.

Among the actions that President Somerson outlined her statement, two are included below:

- “The Center for Social Equity and Inclusion will... welcome two new Fellows with focused expertise on the historical and contemporary implications of systemic racism and how it intersections with the various disciplines we teach.”
- “The Center will also continue its Decolonial Teaching in Action course, a course specifically aimed at giving faculty the space and resources to dive deeper into the way racism, xenophobia, and colonialism inform their work and teaching, and provide them with some tools to begin decolonizing their own teaching and course content.”



President Mandel framed her statement, which is available [here](#), as a call-to-action to confront racial & social injustice, grouping the institution's efforts to combat anti-Black racism across 4 domains: community engagement, targeted philanthropy, strategic partnerships, and programs.

Among the actions that President Mandel outlined in her statement, two are included below:

- “We’ll create a new student engagement initiative through which the college will offer a suite of internships, fellowships, and other co-curricular offerings for students interested in working on racial justice issues.”
- “Williams will invest at least \$500,000 over the next five years to support racial justice organizations and efforts nationally and in our region.”

THEME THREE: LEVERAGE THE POWER OF THE PRESIDENTIAL BULLY PULPIT

Recognizing that reforms designed to overcome longstanding structural racism at colleges and universities hinge on presidential leadership, ATI presidents have used statements to take personal accountability for systemic equity and anti-racism efforts, sending a clear message about the importance of this work.



In her statement, which is available [here](#), President Altmann noted the impact of university leaders taking accountability for, and leading actions to redress, inequities experienced by Black students, faculty, and staff. This communication represents an individual promise to the F&M community that the institution will take all actions it can to address racism and injustice.

President Altmann offered the following reflections in her statement:

- “As a college president, I am in a position of authority. Across the country, we need leadership to stand up and step up. Franklin & Marshall must achieve higher standards for our own conduct, policies and procedures, and expectations.”
- “There are very specific things that I want & need to happen at F&M and I will accept no less than this: our students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents & neighbors in Lancaster must be able to see, by our actions and not just our words, that we are dedicated to addressing racism, injustice, and inequity.”



In his statement, which is available [here](#), President Iuliano assumed accountability for a set of commitments that enables Gettysburg to better realize its goals of equal opportunity and representation. As a part of this pledge, he also accepted responsibility for ensuring others on campus embrace this charge, a step that enables Gettysburg to remain focused on these commitments.

President Iuliano made the following pledge in his statement:

- “The College has worked hard on these issues in recent years but we must redouble our efforts, and as president, that commitment begins with me.”
- “It’s going to take more than any single College organization to bring about change we need on our campus & beyond; it will require action by all of us, guided by our mission & fortified by our commitment to justice. I’m devoted to leading this charge and to holding us accountable for tangible progress.”

THEME FOUR: ASSUME ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE RESULTS OF ANTI-RACIST ACTIONS

Many ATI institutions set explicit measures of accountability for actions aimed at promoting a more equitable environment for Black and other underrepresented students and community members. Milestone dates to demonstrate progress or concrete expectations of participation in initiatives are just some examples of how institutions have held themselves accountable to commitments to combat systemic racism.

Bowdoin

In his statement, which is available [here](#), President Rose outlined 11 actions that Bowdoin will address in an effort to confront systemic racism, setting accompanying goals and metrics. These goals, for which he claims personal accountability, will be reflected in an actionable work plan shaped by campus stakeholders.

Among the actions that President Rose outlined in his statement, two are included below:

- “Require and support every division of the College to develop a plan for the education of its members on institutional racism and anti-racism, building allyship, and creating a more diverse work environment.”
- “Create the mechanisms to have greater success in recruiting more Black students, and students from other communities of color, and give them the support necessary for success.”



In his statement, which is available [here](#), President Crutcher cited the institution’s ongoing efforts to address inequitable experiences across campus, underscoring continued progress toward an equity-focused work plan. In this plan, he offered actionable measures for each of three goals.

In his statement, President Crutcher reaffirmed the University’s commitment to inclusive excellence, with goals to:

- “Continue to recruit talented and diverse students, faculty, and staff to ensure our campus community reflects the rich diversity of our city, region, nation, and increasingly the world.”
- “Cultivate inclusive living, learning, and work environments in which all can fully participate in the life of the institution and experience a sense of belonging.”
- “Become a skilled intercultural community that enables & enriches an unparalleled academic experience.”

THEME FIVE: COMMIT TO INCREASED REPRESENTATION OF BLACK STUDENTS

Several presidents identified factors that have contributed to the underrepresentation of Black students on campus and Black student voices in key forums. Generally, they accompanied these acknowledgments with specific commitments to expand recruiting practices to reach and enroll more Black students as well as take visible steps to ensure the inclusion of their perspectives in major decisions.



President Paxson outlined in **her statement, which is available [here](#)**, how the institution's Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice surfaced a need to address the long-lasting impacts of slavery on educational opportunity and access, with the current crisis prompting the institution to expand on the commitments of its 2016 [diversity and inclusion action plan](#) and redouble its efforts.

In her statement, President Paxson outlined a series of commitments, two of which included efforts to:

- “Launch an initiative to intensify outreach efforts to attract and recruit more African American/Black undergraduate students to Brown with the goal of admitting a more diverse student body.”
- “Engage in discussions with city and state educational leaders to identify specific ways for the University to support efforts to strengthen teaching and learning in the Providence Public Schools.”



In issuing **an action-focused statement with his full leadership team, which is available [here](#)**, President Schapiro underscored a collective investment in far-reaching efforts to combat racism on campus. Among these efforts, the team highlighted the importance of increasing the diversity and representation of Black & other underrepresented students.

In an effort to address this priority, President Schapiro outlined commitments to:

- “Plan to raise specific funds to support the diversification of our student body [and of our faculty].”
- “Be proactive in recruiting Black and other underrepresented students and scholars at all levels by immediately providing resources to schools and departments so they can meet this commitment.”

THEME SIX: PRIORITIZE IMPROVED REPRESENTATION OF BLACK FACULTY

Presidents took this opportunity to promote faculty and staff diversity, using their platform to urge departments to expand the pipelines that they use to identify candidates and fill tenure-track positions. They can also lobby for the participation of Black faculty and staff on major task forces and in institution-wide engagement processes, ensuring their needs and interests are accounted for in any decision.



President Amott underscored in **her statement, which is available [here](#)**, how the recent crises have significantly impacted, and illuminate the struggles of, Black faculty and staff, prompting her to redouble Knox' efforts to transform their hiring and professional development practices in ways that support diversity.

President Amott offered the following commitment in her statement:

- “Earlier this spring, we began the work of... intensifying our hiring practices to diversify Knox faculty and staff, of implementing diversity & inclusion for all employees, and of increasing resources devoted to the support of Black students. That work continues.”



Chancellor Martin's **follow-up statement, which is available [here](#)**, represents an action plan to address systemic racism, highlighting the importance of diverse faculty and staff to the institution's success. In recognition of the need to ensure both students and faculty feel supported and empowered on campus, he proposed a set of immediate commitments.

The actions that Chancellor Martin outlined in his statement included efforts to:

- “Commit additional financial and human resources to recruiting and hiring a more diverse faculty.”
- “...Work closely with the deans of each of our schools on their plans [to address racial equity], which will include significant opportunities for engagement with students, faculty, and staff, a strong emphasis on inclusive pedagogy, and our role in the St. Louis community.”

THEME SEVEN: ACKNOWLEDGE INSTITUTIONS' HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH RACISM

Presidents have used this moment to take accountability for their own institutions' historical roles in systems that perpetuate racism, prejudice, and bias. This admission responds to calls for such recognition by students, faculty, and other members of the campus community.



President Hatch opened **his statement**, which can be accessed [here](#), with a direct repudiation of the Institution's past connections to slavery and racism -- and acknowledged how that compelled him to form a Commission tasked with offering recommendations that support a more diverse and equitable community.

President Hatch has outlined several commitments over the past several months:

- In his statement during the University's Feb. 20 Founders' Day Convocation, President Hatch offered several reflections, telling the audience that the Institution's Slavery, Race and Memory Project was producing a collection of [essays](#) that will further help Wake Forest acknowledge and understand its past.
- In his June 9 message, Hatch said "recognition of our past is a necessary step toward continuing our current work to dismantle the lingering vestiges of the institution of slavery, racism and inequities that undermine our community."



President Price timed **his follow-up statement**, which is available [here](#), to coincide with Juneteenth, reflecting on the strides the institution must take to realize racial equity. In spirit with this sentiment, and an acknowledgment of the historical legacy of racism in the region, he outlines a set of bold commitments designed to achieve racial justice.

In his statement, President Price offered the following reflections:

- "As a Duke community, we want to lead the way: on a campus that has had its share of painful moments, and here in the American South, with its legacies of enslaving Black people, undermining Reconstruction, enforcing segregation, and resisting integration through Massive Resistance and other means, and brutally suppressing—and even to this day frustrating at so many turns—the life chances of our Black neighbors and colleagues."
- "We must take transformative action now toward eliminating the systems of racism and inequality that have shaped the lived experiences of too many members of the Duke community."

THEME EIGHT: RE-ENGAGE WITH CAMPUS AND LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Institutional leaders used the recent focus on police brutality as an impetus to reimagine campus safety practices. In addition to re-examining training of, and protocols for, their own public safety departments, they, at times, engaged in efforts to reform policing in their surrounding communities by serving on task forces, moderating community conversations, and/or supporting research on data-driven policing practices.



President Gabel focused **her statement, which is available [here](#)**, in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder on efforts to reform the university’s relationship with the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD), addressing widespread community anguish. The modified relationship reflects their envisioned role of MPD.

President Gabel made the following commitment in her statement:

- “We will limit our collaboration with the MPD to joint patrols & investigations that directly enhance the safety of our community or that allow us to investigate and apprehend those who put our students, faculty, and staff at risk.”

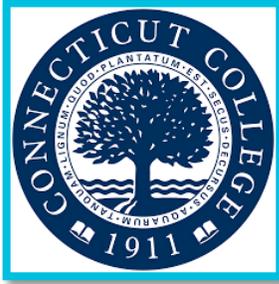


President Byerly positioned **her statement, which is available [here](#)**, as a reflection of the ways in which Lafayette can realize its anti-racist ideals, primarily through a reexamination of its relationships with both its campus public safety department and the local police unit. As a part of these re-casted relationships, she committed to several actions:

The action items that President Byerly outlined in her statement include efforts to:

- “[Have Lafayette Department of Public Safety Director Jeff Troxell and Easton Police Department Chief Carl Scalzo] engage students and others in discussions about how to build trust and confidence in the community they serve.”
- “Establish a task force, to include two members of the President’s Cabinet, along with student, faculty, staff and alumni representatives, to gather community input about the work of Public Safety and its collaboration with the Easton Police Department, and develop recommendations for ways to enhance its relationship with the Black student community and other marginalized groups.”

Action Guide: *Presidential Statements on Racial Equity*



President Bergeron positioned **her statement, which is available [here](#)**, as an institution-wide call-to-action, informed by ten commitments aligned with goals outlined in their Equity and Inclusion Action Plan. As a part of these efforts, she offered dedicated action items associated with campus safety and law enforcement:

In her statement, President Bergeron offered the following action steps:

- “Responding to a growing national movement to transform the nature of policing, the College will review its own procedures for handling campus incidents in order to move the department of campus safety toward a more inclusive, community-oriented philosophy of intervention.”
- “In the same vein, the College will engage our campus safety officers in a set of conversations about implicit bias, racial profiling, and how to counteract them.”

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