

## THEMES

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Three broad themes inform this revision of the Comprehensive Plan: the need for cross-cultural and intercultural competencies in a global environment, the need for enhanced institutional accountability, and the need to be agents of reconciliation and restoration. These themes do not function sequentially but rather simultaneously; they are interwoven, each illuminating and complementing the others. It would be a mistake to assume that the task of combating institutional and personal racism is one we can ever hope to complete. But it would be equally mistaken to assume that we must first solve all the problems of racism before we can hope to engage fruitfully in the work of reconciliation and multicultural community-building. Anti-racist accountability cannot be divorced from the pursuit of reconciliation and restoration; one will always be incomplete without the other, and the successful cultivation of cross-cultural and intercultural competencies depends on both.

### **Multicultural Citizenship**

When the original Comprehensive Plan was formulated, the college's primary focus of concern was North America—specifically, the United States. Over the intervening years, that focus has broadened dramatically. Thanks to increased migration and mobility, many once homogeneous communities are taking on an increasingly international flavor. The number of different nation

alities, ethnicities, and cultural traditions to be found within Calvin's student body and faculty continues to multiply. Foreign travel and study have become commonplace; students increasingly find careers with international agencies and multinational businesses, both here and abroad. The college continues to expand its engagement with individual and institutional partners across Asia and Africa as well as Europe and South America.

If we are serious about equipping ourselves and our students to become effective agents of renewal and shalom in contemporary society, we owe it to ourselves as well as to our global neighbors, here and elsewhere, to improve our abilities to build community, understanding, and justice across racial, ethnic, and cultural lines—in dorms, classrooms, the workplace, the church, and the public arena. Given the increasingly global environment in which we find ourselves, the scope of the Comprehensive Plan cannot be limited solely to relations between the college's traditional constituencies and those sisters and brothers referred to in the original plan as “North American ethnic minorities.” The plan must also take account of the much wider spectrum of peoples and tribes that make up the body of Christ, in Grand Rapids and around the world. At the same time, however, the fact that the college is located where it is, in the United States, means that all endeavors to promote cross-cultural justice and understanding are inevitably affected in some way by this nation's peculiar racial history and dynamics. Hence, while the scope of the plan may expand, its basic thrust and focus remain unchanged.

## **Anti-Racism and Accountability**

To the extent that racism is ultimately a matter of systemic and institutionalized misuse of power, an effective strategy to promote racial justice requires addressing each of the three dimensions of misdirected power identified previously:

1. structures and practices that disempower and control the persons at whom they are aimed;
2. structures and practices that allocate power and privilege to the dominant racial group;

3. structures and practices that implant notions of superiority in the hearts and minds of white people.

In order to combat institutional racism, this revised Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the need for enhanced accountability. When there are persons of color occupying positions of authority, there will be greater potential for identifying ways in which power is being misused for racist ends. Therefore, many of the goals, strategies, and recommendations in this plan seek, implicitly or explicitly, to achieve structural changes that will hold the college more accountable to individuals and communities of color and also to empower those who have previously been disempowered in ways that will permit Calvin College to operate in an actively anti-racist manner.

This emphasis on institutional racism and accountability should not be taken to mean that the specific anti-racist approach presented here represents the only way to analyze or address the issues in question. As a matter of both academic freedom and Christian liberty, faculty, staff, and students have the right to debate specific assumptions, conclusions, and suggested policies and to offer alternative analyses and alternative means of accomplishing particular goals. Mutual accountability for the overall goals of the Comprehensive Plan does not preclude, and in fact encourages, multiple ways of promoting justice and contributing to these goals.

## **Reconciliation and Restoration**

A theme of this revised Comprehensive Plan is the need to pursue the twin purposes of reconciliation and restoration. This theme finds expression, for example, in suggested strategies for training faculty, administration, and staff of the college not simply to confront personal and institutional racism, but, more importantly, to become active agents of racial reconciliation.

Although there are many possible models of reconciliation, the posture of self-emptying discussed earlier undergirds this revision. This posture cannot simply be legislated or engineered. Like many of the virtues enumerated in the rationale for the new core curriculum, it is something that is largely “caught, not

taught.” If members of the faculty, administration, and staff truly become agents of reconciliation, they will also serve as powerful models of reconciliation for students.

Restoration—the establishment of a genuinely multicultural community—is hardly a new emphasis; it is inherent in the bold vision of the original Comprehensive Plan. That plan proposed specific implementation strategies and measurable goals for achieving such a community; it also emphasized the need for specific administrative authority and responsibility in working toward these goals. The current revision continues to advocate strategies for institutional restructuring, but it shifts the emphasis from boldness to earnestness: rather than setting out specific quantitative goals and objectives, it establishes general policy directions, while assigning operational responsibility for establishing specific criteria and monitoring compliance to designated committees and administrators.

The goal of racial reconciliation and restoration—a goal that rests upon an active commitment to identify and root out racism—remains paramount. In the words of the original Comprehensive Plan, we must continue to strive toward “integrating North American ethnic minority persons and their interests into every facet of Calvin’s institutional life.” At the same time, as noted earlier, we must recognize that this North American focus is only part of the larger commitment to justice and multicultural community that is incumbent upon us as citizens of an increasingly interdependent global society and a truly global Kingdom of God. In the pursuit of this commitment, there is no need to pit one set of goals against another. The sensitivities and attitudes engendered by a focused commitment to anti-racism should work to foster genuine multicultural community not only for “North American ethnic minority persons” but also for international students and faculty, and even for white students and faculty who may have felt alienated by Dutch-CRC exclusionism in the past. And the pursuit of restoration in racial and cultural relations should work to reinforce, even as it is reinforced by, the pursuit of restoration in other areas such as gender and class relations.

Guided by these interlocking themes—multicultural citizenship, anti-racism, reconciliation and restoration—we will seek to remain faithful to the institutional calling enunciated in Calvin's Mission Statement: “Through our learning we seek to be agents of renewal in the academy, church, and society. We pledge fidelity to Jesus Christ, offering our hearts and lives to do God's work in God's world.”

