

Strategic Plan



CASE
WESTERN
RESERVE
UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL
JUSTICE
INSTITUTE

Plan Process

The Social Justice Institute held a retreat in December 2014, guided by Starfish Practice. Starfish Practice used an Appreciative Inquiry approach by meeting with the executive director and leadership team to clarify expected outcomes and define an affirmative topic to be used for interviews and the retreat.

An interview guide was developed and used to interview key stakeholders. The SJI leadership team members and supportive faculty conducted the stakeholder interviews. Starfish Practice assessed the interviews for key themes and topics to guide the retreat process.

SJI hosted a half-day retreat with internal and external community partners to engage in a creative visioning process. The goals included:

- Identifying and sharing its successes
- Seeking input on the next growth phase of SJI
- Identifying ongoing needs and future focus areas
- Developing concrete ideas and strategies to strengthen and sustain social justice work long term



VISION

We exist because we believe the university community should be educators and leaders in advancing an inclusive and just society that raises awareness of social injustice; enhances moral courage; promotes critical thinking about power, privilege, and equity; and encourages action and equitable solutions.



MISSION

The mission of the Social Justice Institute is: *“Working toward equal access to opportunity for all people through understanding and addressing the root causes of social injustice and developing innovative solutions.”* Through cooperation, communication, and collaboration, the Social Justice Institute seeks to advance, enhance, and support this mission by:

- supporting innovative and synergistic research, scholarship, and pedagogy
- building and supporting social justice leaders on and off campus
- forging productive relationships across boundaries within the university and into the community

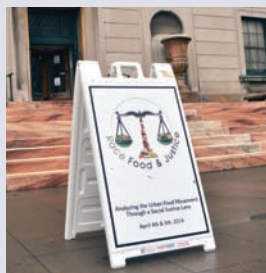
What We Believe

The Social Justice Institute defines social justice as eradicating systems of oppression, with the purpose of advancing fairness and equality through the redistribution and expansion of resources and opportunities, and exalting human dignity and respect.

Our core values stem from this understanding.

We believe in:

- equity
- education
- action
- intergenerational collaboration
- inclusiveness
- community focus
- empathetic relationships
- human dignity



What We've Accomplished

The Social Justice Institute has had significant accomplishments in its first five years. We have developed innovative initiatives and significant partnerships. Some highlights are included below:

- Well-attended signature events, including our Intergenerational Think Tanks on *Social Justice, Empathy and Social Transformation*, *Social Justice, Race, and Profiling and Educating for Struggle*; our annual co-sponsored *Race, Food, and Justice Conference*; our *PowerUP! Student and Youth Leadership* forums; and programming around U.N. World Social Justice Day.
- Rapid response to community-based issues, such as hosting campuswide read-ins and teach-ins focused on police brutality, the recent Department of Justice Findings Report on Cleveland, and racial profiling.
- Development of on-campus and community collaborations for programming with multiple groups, including the Flora Stone Mather Center for Women, the Center for Civic Learning and Engagement, Schubert Center for Child Studies, Environmental Health Watch, the InterReligious Task Force on Central America, The LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland and others.
- Participation in policy development, research, and activism as a founding member of the Collaborative for a Safe, Fair, and Just Cleveland and other initiatives.

- Approval of the SJUS Minor Program, featuring an innovative interdisciplinary curriculum that culminates in a capstone experience.
- Initiation of an SJI research and curricular grant competition for faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates.
- Digitization and online publication of oral interviews gathered through our community-based “Voicing & Action Project” to establish a public repository, as well as the development of a pilot curriculum for use in Shaw High School and other locations.
- Receipt of honors and accolades: SJI was awarded the 2015 departmental award from the Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity, and Director Rhonda Y. Williams received the inaugural Student Affairs’ “Outstanding Faculty Award for Student Development Outside the Classroom.”

Building on our strengths and successes, we seek to advance the Social Justice Institute to the next level with keen attention toward maintaining our programs and events; engaging in cutting-edge and community-responsive research; continuing to develop innovative curricular offerings; and expanding our reach locally and nationally. Expanding our team and our financial resources will be critical to institutionalizing and sustaining our efforts and impact on the campus and beyond.

Where We Are Going

OUR GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: RESEARCH

It is essential to continue and support a strong research agenda and programming that advances the body of science about social justice issues and supports the mission of the Social Justice Institute. A social justice research program requires a critical theoretical and research paradigm that includes, yet extends beyond, classic quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

OBJECTIVES

A. Establish Internal Forums featuring Social Justice Research

A critical element of understanding social injustice is identifying, understanding, and addressing root causes. This requires focused, intentional, and explicit attention to unveiling and understanding history, political economy, and culture, as well as making research and knowledge widely available.

B. Assess and Develop Social Justice Institute Research Agenda & Projects

SJI has been at the forefront of research around cutting-edge issues of race, criminal justice, economic fairness, and environmental and food justice. We have held several successful conferences, attended by members of the CWRU and Cleveland community and involving speakers from both the academy and the community locally and nationally. In addition, we have spearheaded the Voicing and Action Project (VAP) in East Cleveland--a collaborative effort between residents and SJI to document people's personal experiences of social injustice and their visions for the future. In this way, we are creating knowledge and archives, engaging in critical research agendas, and partnering to effect social change.

C. Expansion of Scholarship through Publications and Presentations

Increased scholarly publications and presentations will enhance SJI's visibility and raise our scholarly profile, allowing us to connect more with like-minded institutions and researchers. This body of work may include white papers, policy briefs, conference proceedings, and other materials in addition to more traditional refereed articles and monographs. Our scholarly activity will also contribute to the university's overall prestige and impact.

GOAL 2: EDUCATION & CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Educating for struggle is a central goal of the Social Justice Institute. This includes providing opportunities for public education, programs, and events, as well as innovating university-based curricula. We seek to expand educational opportunities in a way that invites and promotes community learning, as well as maintains effective and innovative pedagogical strategies for the pursuit of social justice studies. Curriculum development and expansion will continue to involve the input and work of faculty and students from multiple disciplines.

OBJECTIVES

A. Provide Critical Public Education & Programming

As a responsible member of the community, SJI has an obligation to provide educational opportunities for the public. We have worked to fulfill this mission through all of our past programming. This programming includes Intergenerational Think Tanks; Power Up! Youth and Student Leadership Conferences; UN World Social Justice Day programs; Race, Food, and Justice Conferences; Gender and Social Justice Programs; and From Conversation to Action: Social Justice Read-Ins and Teach-Ins. Collectively, these programs have drawn thousands of participants and attendees in the past five years. We will continue this critical educational outreach and empowerment that extends beyond the walls of the university, while adapting to the changing needs of the community and expanding our geographic reach.

B. Expand upon the University-wide, Undergraduate SJUS Curriculum

Innovative and critical educational programming within the walls of the university is also key to SJI's mission. In the spring of 2012, we rolled out the SJUS 100 course--an interdisciplinary introduction to social justice themes and methods that is team-taught by faculty from a variety of departments. From there, we have expanded to a Social Justice Minor Program, which was approved in the fall of 2014 and instituted in the spring of 2015. We will continue to expand our undergraduate curriculum by creating a Social Justice major and supporting faculty who wish to bring a social justice focus to their courses.

C. Develop a Graduate/Professional Social Justice Curriculum

For social justice to fully permeate the campus culture, a curricular focus on social justice must continue at the graduate and professional levels. We will build upon our undergraduate curriculum by developing a graduate and professional curriculum.

D. Coordinate with SAGES

Currently, there are numerous SAGES courses that explicitly identify social justice as a topic or theme of the course. SJI will assess these courses for inclusion in its SJUS Minor Program and advanced curricula, as well as coordinate other opportunities for students to engage with the Social Justice Institute.

E. Develop Internships and Externships

Through developing internships and externships, we will create, identify, and leverage existing opportunities that link the study of root causes of injustice to action-oriented initiatives, research, and professional experiences. In so doing, we will heighten students' awareness and understanding of social justice issues at the local level and beyond.

GOAL 3: PARTNERSHIP AND MENTORSHIP

The Social Justice Institute's vitality, strength, and impact depends on the quality of its partnerships within the university and beyond the walls of CWRU. We will build on the relationships we have already established and reach out beyond those to enhance and further advance our social justice work among faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the broader community. We will concentrate in the short and long term on developing and nurturing our networks to invite and sustain engagement. We will do this by working to enhance strategic relationships; offering the opportunity for stakeholders who align with SJI's mission and vision to be partners and change agents; and helping to shape the conversation on current events.

OBJECTIVES

A. Enhance Existing and Build New Strategic Relationships

To help SJI to thrive, expand, and actively develop a culture of social justice, we will enhance and continue to build concrete partnerships with both internal and external partners. In order to enhance participation in SJI, we will identify what interests our partners, as well as what they hope to gain from a relationship with SJI. The ultimate objective is the active engagement, investment, and commitment of internal and external partners to developing a culture of social justice

on and off campus. SJI and our partners will benefit through mutual support, as well as through the expansion and potential impact of our work.

B. Offer Training on Becoming Social Justice Partners and Change Agents

From the beginning, SJI has worked to educate others to carry on its social justice mission. For example, we have sponsored a number of conferences and programs that have been open to the campus and broader public. This has included the Intergenerational Think Tanks, the annual U.N. World Social Justice Day events, and the Power Up! Student and Youth Leadership Conference—a unique symposium that teaches participants about social justice and trains them to become agents for change. SJI strives to continue this training by expanding our network of speakers and organizers.

C. Shape the Conversation on Current Events

Educating for struggle is key to SJI's mission. Current events often provide a particularly effective vehicle for social justice learning and activism. For example, SJI has worked closely with the Collaborative for a Fair, Safe and Just Cleveland, an organization that was created after a series of police shootings in Cleveland and the publication of the U.S. Department of Justice report, which found that the Cleveland Division of Police had engaged in a pattern or practice of excessive and unreasonable use of force. By addressing these immediate or present-day crises, SJI demonstrates our relevance to the campus and Cleveland community, as well as the nation.

D. Initiate a Social Justice Student Club

In 2012, the Social Justice Institute sponsored the New Abolitionist Association chapter on campus and initiated a student organization, Students 4 Social Justice. In 2015, SJI increased its engagement with students by meeting with staff, including the director of the First Year Experience and first-year coordinators with residential colleges; presenting at forums sponsored by Greek Life; supporting the Afro-American Society in its "We Belong Here" movement; and re-tooling and launching PowerUP!

In addition to building on these efforts, SJI also seeks to create and sustain our own student organization, the CWRU Social Justice Student club. Many of our students care deeply about social justice and crave belonging to a community that encourages them to share and build upon their social justice passions. Initiating a student club is one way to institutionalize SJI's connection with the student body and provide a structure within which students' commitment to social justice can thrive. The energy and knowledge that students embody can inform SJI's work in invaluable ways.

GOAL 4: INCREASED VISIBILITY

The Social Justice Institute's sustainability depends not only on the impact of our work, but also on our ability to communicate that impact to others. We must therefore engage in intentional and effective strategies for publicizing SJI and its initiatives. In this way, SJI will continue to share our advances and successes and inform them of the resources that SJI offers. We will do this by building awareness of SJI on campus and by increasing its footprint on social media and in the community.

OBJECTIVES

A. Build Awareness of SJI's Successes and Programs

We will increase publicity of SJI and its programs on campus. As an interdisciplinary, university-wide institute, SJI has the advantage of drawing on faculty, staff, and students from the College and our schools. However, since SJI lacks a traditional "home" in the College or the schools, we do not have a built-in infrastructure for communicating with our potential on-campus constituents or promoting our work. SJI will therefore work to raise awareness on campus by diversifying our materials, outreach, and communication strategies.

B. Develop a Stronger Presence throughout Cleveland and Beyond

Outside CWRU, we must further develop and strengthen our partnerships with local academic institutions and community organizations in order to ensure SJI's reach and sustainability. We will do this by developing a stronger physical presence in the community through events and research that reach beyond the University Circle area.

C. Strengthen Alumni Relationships

As the Social Justice Institute continues to grow, an increasing number of alumni will graduate with strong connections to SJI. We will leverage these alumni as ambassadors and view them as constituents who have a stake in our work. Alumni can be involved both directly and indirectly in SJI's mission.

GOAL 5: INFRASTRUCTURE

In order for the Social Justice Institute to expand its capacity for activism, public education, curriculum development, pedagogical innovation, and research, we will need a strong economic foundation and the ability to support the personnel required to carry out our mission. Strong infrastructure and economic support are essential to

sustainability. This includes both internal infrastructure (operational costs, space, endowment) and external infrastructure (support by external partners). In order to achieve our goals, we will need to increase and sustain our budget. We will also work to solidify and expand relationships with our partners through establishing an Advisory Board and obtaining support from key stakeholders. Finally, we will create long-term sustainability through identifying a permanent space for SJI.

OBJECTIVES

A. Secure a Permanent Annual Operating Budget

It is a real challenge to obtain outside funding for operating costs of a relatively new institute, as opposed to specific programs or projects. A permanent, university-supported, annual base-line operating budget is therefore essential to ensure SJI's work can continue year to year at a baseline level.

B. Identify Revenue Opportunities from SJI Research and Presentations

SJI has already established a strong reputation in the Cleveland community and beyond. As a result, the Director and Leadership Team members are often invited to speak, present, research, and consult on social justice issues. In some cases, our partners would be willing and able to compensate us for this work. We will therefore attempt to generate some revenue from this work in order to further advance our mission.

C. Develop an Advisory Board

An Advisory Board is an important source of support, vision, and insight. An Advisory Board also, ideally, represents a group of ambassadors and liaisons with the world outside the Social Justice Institute.

D. Establish an Endowment for the Social Justice Institute

An endowment for the Social Justice Institute would ensure its longevity by providing a permanent source of operational funding and resources to sustain its projects and initiatives, thereby providing a bulwark against financial instability. Ideally, a substantial endowment would supplant the need for a baseline operating budget provided by the University.

E. Expand Physical Infrastructure

The ultimate, ideal setting for SJI would be a stand-alone building with offices, meeting space, program space, and community meeting rooms. In the shorter term, usable and permanent physical space currently provides a base for SJI's expanding staff and programming.



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CONNECT WITH US!

For more information about the Social Justice Institute, attending upcoming events or becoming a supporter, visit the SJI website or contact us:

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