



**President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR)
Religious Inclusion Working Group
DRAFT Minutes
Friday, March 21, 2025
9:00-10:00 am
In Person, Morrison Hall Board Room 102**

Attendees:

Megan Fogarty, Donald MacGillivray, Muffy McIntyre, Barry MacKenzie Sara Parks, Donna Trembinski, and Jennifer Sylvester (*Recording*)

Regrets

Islam Ahmed, Sylvia Brazeau, Jamie Levin, Abby Hopkins, Caspian Tohidian, Moran Wortman, Elizabeth Yeo

S. Parks opened the meeting with a welcome at 9:09 am and summarized the CAS standards relevant to campus religion.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) formulates standards and guidelines for higher education services. The purpose of Campus Religious and Spiritual Programs (CRSP) is to provide access to programs that enable interested students to pursue full spiritual growth and development and to foster a campus atmosphere in which interested members of the college community may freely express their religion, spirituality, and faith.

The following section of the document has been highlighted for focused discussion:

To the extent either required or prohibited by constitutional, statutory, or regulatory provisions, institutions must provide reasonable opportunities for students to

- *question, explore, understand, affiliate with or avoid, and express or reject various religious faiths and/or spiritual beliefs and practices*
- *seek individual counseling or group associations for the examination and application of religious and/or spiritual values and beliefs*
- *worship communally and individually*
- *pray and meditate*

At StFX we are already addressing many of the recommended CAS opportunities across various units, including Student Services, Wellspring, Chaplaincy, and Residence, among others.

There are opportunities for further improvement in empowering students to both understand and choose to engage with religion, while also respecting their right to reject it. It's crucial to maintain a clear distinction between the University and the Church, as this upholds pluralism. Additionally, enhancing religious literacy, particularly for secular students, is a key component of our broader wellbeing mandate.



There are areas to further develop, around religious understanding and the balance between secular and religious identities, while emphasizing the importance of pluralism and religious literacy for all students.

The good work happening at StFX needs to be institutionalized for consistency and continuity, and integrated into our policies and practices, when individuals transition out of their roles

Discussion stemming from report.

The current structure of the Chaplaincy is limited in its ability to support all religious traditions, and not all religious communities are available in Antigonish. The goal is to display pluralism, welcome, respect, and to raise religious/cultural literacy levels.

Some changes can be implemented with little to no cost, such as making small adjustments to language and communication strategies and further explore how to support student led initiatives in these areas through societies and clubs.

To provide students the opportunity to avoid or reject religious messaging, small adjustments can be made, such as:

Ensuring clear separation between university messaging and insider religious messaging.

Adding terms like "optional" to religious events (e.g., Mass) in the ceremonial program.

Providing links to additional religious or community events alongside the Mass.

Offering more detailed explanations of Catholic and other religious offerings, avoiding assumptions about familiarity with terminology, and making the language more welcoming for those outside the Catholic community.

At our next meeting, B. Mackenzie will lead the discussion of "Heritage"

StFX's Catholic heritage is unique compared to generic Catholic traditions, as it incorporates elements of social activism, a focus on hospitality, and an emphasis on the underdog. It also highlights the role of powerful women and has strong ties to the labour movement, setting it apart from more traditional Catholic backgrounds. Is there an opportunity to provide tours and information sessions to new faculty and staff— like tours Barry M. was giving the year Sara P. was onboarded?)

Meeting adjourned at 10:14 am.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 1, 2025, 1:00-2:00 pm