

NEWS RELEASE

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SUNY ONEONTA FORMS TASK FORCE TO REVIEW CAMPUS POLICE

ONEONTA, N.Y. – In response to country-wide protests this summer regarding inequality, injustice and police brutality, SUNY Oneonta has created “The UPD and the Oneonta College Community Task Force” to examine University Police practices and review police-community relations on campus.

The group, led by Dr. Robert Compton, professor and chair of the Africana and Latinx Studies Department, consists of eight members of the campus community. Together, they will conduct a survey, interview key stakeholders, review practices and policies, and identify the strengths and potential issues that concern the campus community regarding policing. It will then compile a report based on the information gathered and present these findings to Acting President Dennis Craig and the college community by the end of the 2020-21 academic year.

Initial plans to form the task force came this summer as country-wide protests broke out regarding incidents of police brutality and racially motivated violence against black people. The initiative is in line with Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s Executive Order to Reinvent and Modernize Police Strategies and Programs, which was signed on June 12.

SUNY Oneonta has an added responsibility to condemn social injustice, police brutality and racial profiling because of its history involving the Black List, which raised questions of civil rights, profiling and privacy issues on a national level in September 1992.

The UPD and the Oneonta College Community Task Force consists of the following members:

- **Aliyah Abdelsalam**, a student at SUNY Oneonta majoring in political science and mathematics.

- **Cameron Allison**, undersheriff of the Otsego County Sheriff's Office, adjunct lecturer of criminal justice at SUNY Oneonta and retired Oneonta Police Department Lieutenant.
- **Dr. Howard Ashford**, assistant professor of Africana and Latinx Studies whose research focuses on the rural African American experience and liberation politics.
- **Dr. Beniam Awash**, assistant professor of sociology and criminal justice who specializes in violence and conflict.
- **Dr. Robert Compton**, professor and chair of the Africana and Latinx Studies Department and a 20-year veteran of SUNY Oneonta. Compton is the former Interim UUP Chapter President and Vice President for 13 years and Senate Presiding Officer and was a Fulbright Scholar with the University of Zimbabwe.
- **Pathy Leiva**, director of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) and interim director of Education Opportunity Program (EOP) & Access to College Excellence (ACE).
- **Dr. William Simons**, professor of History and former president of UUP Oneonta. Simons formerly worked as campus security at Boston College and Simmons College and for Simons Uniforms, a business outfitter of law enforcement and other personnel.
- **Dr. Bernadette Tiapo**, associate vice president and chief diversity officer. Tiapo served as associate vice president and CDO at SUNY Potsdam for the past four years and has prior experience as Director of Institutional Diversity and CDO at the University of St. Francis, Joliet, IL. She has extensive experience working on diversity, equity and inclusion related issues in higher education institutions as well as with community organizations, including working with university police departments and community law enforcement leadership.