



**MONTCLAIR STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

## University Senate

### **Recommendation on External Consultation for a University Land-Acknowledgement Statement**

Approved by the University Senate - May 19th, 2021

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The University Senate recommends that the University, in consultation with the Land Acknowledgement Committee members, retain 2-3 Indigenous expert external consultants to assist in the research and development of a Land Acknowledgement Statement as part of a broader University initiative to decolonize the Institution.

#### **Rationale**

The current University Senate Committee on Land Acknowledgement is composed of members of the University community with experience and expertise in both social-justice work and collaboration with local Indigenous people. However, it is not their voices and visions that should be centered in a more expansive effort to decolonize the University. Individuals from Indigenous communities who have expertise in changing institutional structures and policies need to be at the forefront of any effort to draft a Land Acknowledgement Statement and identify related action steps.

In addition, there is a need for experts who are well-versed in navigating tribal and legal issues of the North Eastern United States at both federal and state levels as they relate to Land Acknowledgement. They also will need to be able to understand and negotiate local and national tribal politics. They need to be compensated for this work, just as anyone else who has a valuable set of skills would be.

#### **Background**

Although Land Acknowledgement Statements are increasingly being issued by various institutions, there is standing concern that such statements offer little but symbolic gestures and do not fundamentally change policies and structures that perpetuate inequality and systemic racism. For this reason, the Senate believes that any Land Acknowledgement Statement issued by the University needs to be tied to concrete and actionable steps that will reshape the University's relationship with local and national Indigenous communities.

As a core principle, the University cannot expect members of the local and national indigenous communities to work in a *pro bono* fashion.

The University Senate's Land Acknowledgement Committee is prepared to provide a short list of expert names from the local Indigenous communities for consideration as a starting point for the administration.

Reference: Inside Higher Ed: Land Acknowledgments Accomplish Little (January 9, 2020)

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/01/09/why-land-acknowledgments-arent-worth-much-opinion>