



## Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas

*2021 initiatives to create a safer and more inclusive community*

In an effort to continue to evolve our culture, we are committed to taking steps to make our organization safer, more diverse and more inclusive. The following is a list of initiatives we have implemented over this past year. It is by no means all-encompassing nor is it complete. We realize that our progress can only be measured by our actions and the broader lasting impact they will have on our organization and our industry at large. This is an ongoing quest that requires long term vision, dedication, and commitment from our entire organization to continue to improve each day. We are grateful for our membership and our community for supporting us on this journey.

### Engaging New Voices

- Held series of listening sessions to engage with larger community; topics included [Amplifying Female Voices](#), [Diversity in the industry](#), [Examination Transparency](#), and [Somm Moms](#)
- Restructured and reformed ten CMS-A Committees
- The Diversity Committee led over a dozen [Instagram live sessions](#) to help amplify voices from underrepresented communities, states, and sectors of our industry
- Engaged higher education experts on [scholarship applications](#) and selection process to remove unconscious bias and create a more equitable process
- In order to measure representation of various groups and impact of DEI initiatives we added demographic and gender identification questions on all [applications](#)
- Launched [online programming](#) to make Introductory Sommelier Course and Examination accessible to reach a broader group of students, removing the obstacles of travel, time off from work or family obligations, and travel costs from participating in our Introductory programming
- Initiated and awarded [100 scholarships](#) for BIPOC, woman-identifying, and those experiencing financial hardship to take the [Online Introductory Sommelier Course](#)
- Revised exam [dress guidelines](#) and removed gender-based service as part of our teaching and examination to support diversity and gender equality
- Launched [SommAssembly](#) to help engage with candidates and continue development during the pandemic
- Appointed [Julie Cohen Theobald](#) as the first external Executive Director to lead the organization
- Approved four external board seats for non-MS Directors, with expertise in human resources, education, credentialing, and diversity, equity, inclusion – to be filled in early 2022

### Increased Transparency

- Initiated monthly membership updates from Board of Directors
- Updated [recusal process](#) to enable candidates to request recusals of Master Sommeliers at their examination
- Providing structured post-exam feedback reports with specific information on exam content to every Advanced and Master Sommelier exam candidate
- Began sharing percentage scores at Master Sommelier exams and committed to sharing percentage scores at Advanced Sommelier exams in 2022

## Making CMS-A a Safer Place

- Established criteria for all Master Sommeliers to teach and participate in Court-sponsored programming. These currently include trainings on Workplace Diversity, Inclusion & Sensitivity; Unconscious Bias; Micro Aggressions in the Workplace; and Preventing Discrimination and Harassment, along with signing of Code of Ethics, and being in good standing
- Informed our community of all Master Sommeliers eligible to participate in CMS-A sponsored activities via a denotation on our [website](#)
- Engaged an external investigator to lead the investigation of cases of sexual misconduct
- Introduced [Anti-Racism Pledge](#)
- Updated [Non Discrimination Policy](#)
- Introduced the [Candidate Bill of Rights](#) as part of our [Code of Professional Ethics](#) Suite
- Engaging with the Rutgers Center on Violence Against Women & Children and [RALIANCE](#), an organization whose mission is to end sexual violence
- Utilized outside consult from ethics experts to assist in re-writing [Code of Ethics](#) and revamp ethics documents
- Launched a confidential and anonymous Ethics Reporting Line through Lighthouse Service  
Website: [www.lighthouse-services.com/mastersommeliers](http://www.lighthouse-services.com/mastersommeliers)  
Toll Free Phone: English Speaking 833-373-0329 / Spanish Speaking 800-216-1288
- Launched the Digital Suggestion Box  
[www.lighthouse-services.com/mastersommeliers.sb-mastersommeliers.asp](http://www.lighthouse-services.com/mastersommeliers.sb-mastersommeliers.asp)