Washington University in St. Louis

BROWN SCHOOL

Capitalizing on Momentum: Opportunities to Fully Model
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

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ADVANCING SOCIAL WORK, PUBLIC HEALTH & SOCIAL POLICY

Background

The Brown School holds social justice and equity as guiding principles in our work, and these values direct our community's efforts around diversity and inclusion. Leading in this area is a central feature of the Brown School's history and mission, and we have achieved significant gains in cultivating a more diverse and inclusive environment, thus seeding the work for advancing equity. Key events and activities included, but were not limited to the following:

1. Formation of the Brown School Task force in November 2010, chaired by professors Michael Sherraden and Molly Tovar.
2. A comprehensive assessment conducted by the task force that included documenting previous initiatives; auditing racial composition; cataloging policies and procedures; and conducting a climate survey and school wide discussions.
3. Audit findings that revealed that in 2011-12 the Brown School faculty, senior administration, staff, and students were predominately white, attrition of faculty of color was high, underrepresented minorities (URMs) were less likely to be hired for staff positions and they were more likely to leave the school after being hired.
4. A review of recruitment and hiring practices demonstrated that only limited systematic efforts had been put in place at the Brown School to recruit, hire, and retain URM faculty and staff. In addition, there was a systematic misunderstanding of diversity and inclusion within the Brown School, with significant adherence to the "colorblind" perspective.

The Task Force recommended: (1) Adopting inclusive recruitment, hiring, and retention/advancement practices (2) Increasing diversity among administrators, faculty, staff and students; (3) Increasing academic capacity for American Indian studies; (4) Fostering a climate for diversity and inclusion; (5) Institutionalizing diversity training and resources; (6) Connecting our diversity and inclusion commitment to the St. Louis community; (7) Making diversity and inclusion on-going commitments; and (8) Modeling a positive, diverse academic life for Washington University. The taskforce also advocated for the formation of a permanent standing committee on Diversity & Inclusion, created in 2013 that developed the Brown School definition of diversity and inclusion, which was approved by the faculty in 2013. The Taskforce and the Committee both strongly recommended the establishment of an Associate Dean for Diversity & Inclusion to provide leadership and accountability for advancing the institutional changes that were needed. This role is believed to have been the first such position within a school of social work in the country and was filled by Dr. Tonya Edmond in 2015.

Under the leadership of Dr. Tonya Edmond, the Office on Diversity, Inclusion & Equity supported the implementation of the taskforce recommendations, using them as a set of strategic institutional priorities critical to the mission and values of the Brown School, including (but not limited to):

- Adoption of inclusive practices & policies, including resources and training for the Personnel Advisory Committee and the Promotion & Tenure Committee; permanent representation from the Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Committee on the Personnel Advisory Committee; addition of a performance review question about diversity and inclusion activities for all staff; an inclusive use of pronouns policy and establishment of gender inclusive bathrooms to our buildings.
- From 2012 to 2018 the Administrative Leadership Team, which was 100% white, is now 44% URM, 78% female, and 22% Lesbian/Gay; there has been a 100% increase in URM faculty and a 300% increase in URM Chaired Professors; 33% of current tenured/tenure track faculty are URM; 25% of current faculty are African/African American.
- The academic capacity for American Indian Studies has been strengthened by the addition of two American Indian faculty.
- Created multiple pathways for faculty & staff professional development and engagement in this work through inclusive teaching workshops, speakers, trainings, conferences, book clubs and films; expanded support, recognition ceremonies and events for URM and LGBT students.

This work has led to significant improvement in the School's Campus and Climate Survey results among diverse groups. The Brown School's commitment to establishing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community is in tandem with Washington University's commitment to cultivating a stronger climate of diversity and inclusion.

External Environment

The governing and accrediting bodies for social work and public health educational programs have elevated the significance of diversity, inclusion, and equity, incorporating them into their professional competencies and ethical standards. Likewise, the largest social work and public health professional organizations devote sustained investment in achieving goals related to diversity and equity, and call upon students, faculty and professionals to advance these principles in their communities and worldwide. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) supports inclusiveness, equity, and justice through the Commission for Diversity and Social and Economic Justice and the Center for Diversity and Social & Economic Justice. In addition, two of CSWE's accrediting standards explicitly address aspects of well-being related to diversity and social and economic justice. Similarly, the Association of Schools and Programs Public Health (ASPPH) convenes the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, which focuses on activities to realize the benefits of diversity and inclusion in all academic public health mission areas. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world has a strong affirmative action program and supports three national committees on equity issues. Creating health equity is a guiding priority and core value of the American Public Health Association (APHA). APHA has explicitly named racism as a barrier to health equity, and its Committee on Health Equity is charged with assuring that APHA meets its diversity, inclusion and social justice goals.

Evolving demographics continue to drive efforts to increase and sustain diversity among social work and public health students, faculty, and staff. For instance, by 2055, the U.S. will not have a single racial or ethnic majority. Hispanic and Latinx Americans are the largest ethnic minority and Asian and multi-race people are the two fastest growing segments of the U.S. population. At the local level, one third of the St. Louis region's population will be people of color by 2040. The overall collegiate population is becoming more diverse; nationally the percentage of students of color increased from 29.6% in 1996 to 45.2% in 2016. Additionally, the growth in college enrollment from international students is outpacing overall college enrollment. New foreign student enrollment at U.S. colleges and universities doubled between 2008 and 2016.

Based on demographic data, the Brown School enjoys the most diverse administrative team, faculty, staff and student body of any school on the Washington University campus. Brown School tenure/tenure track faculty is comprised of 49% women and 32% URMs compared to the entire campus of Washington University, which reports that 31% of tenure/tenure track faculty are women and 11% are URMs. While our gender data looks better than that of the University, it must be noted that this is in a professional context where social work is 85% female and public health is 70% female as professions. Full time, non-tenured faculty at the Brown School consist of 75% women and 13% URMs; at the University level its 49% women and 7% URMs.

The school's student profile aligns with trends in national social work and public health graduate programs. National data from CSWE's 2017 annual survey shows that the majority of full-time master of social work students are White (50.8%), female (85.3%), and 25–34 years old (40%); full-time students from historically underrepresented groups comprised almost 40% of the total enrollment in social work programs. According to 2016 ASPPH data, women represented 73% of degrees awarded, and non-white students represented 47% of degrees awarded. A snapshot of the incoming Brown School student profile taken in August 2019, showed that:
- Female students represented more than almost 80% of participants in every degree program; and
- More than half the students identified as Caucasian (57%) and 26% as international students.

At the global level, equity is at the forefront of efforts to achieve gender equality and to eliminate health disparities. For instance, the United Nations (UN) is committed to achieving gender equality and empowering

all girls and women worldwide, while the World Health Organization focuses on health equity. National conversations focus on the significant financial cost of inequity, such as health disparities, opportunity gaps in education, the gender pay gap, disability equality, and racial inequity. W.K. Kellogg Foundation's *The Business Case for Racial Equity* reports that the nation stands to realize an $8 trillion gain in Gross Domestic Product by closing the racial equity gap.

Regionally, the emergence of significant collective action toward advancing racial equity was spurred by the 2014 murder of an unarmed black youth in Ferguson, MO. The death of Michael Brown, Jr., brought new urgency and visibility to systemic racial inequities in the St. Louis region, including life expectancy, median household income, unemployment rates, rates of incarceration, childhood poverty, out of school suspensions, and more. Economists at the UMSL Public Policy Research Center estimate that the St. Louis region lost $13.7 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) because of its racial income gap. Since the release of the Ferguson Commission's report, regional stakeholders have mobilized around the calls to action and signature priorities, to achieve a racially equitable region by the year 2039.

Strategic Themes

Stakeholders identified multiple issues that will influence the future of our School and regional community including:
- National shifts in demographics;
- Global engagement and immigration regulation;
- Evolving ability to attract, engage, and retain diverse students, staff and faculty; and
- The investment of school resources in under resourced areas of the region, particularly to support the advancement of equity via collaborative partnerships.

Stakeholders also seemed to realize that the growing trend of centering equity in social work, public health, and social policy represents an opportunity for the Brown School to strengthen its institutional competency for embedding a diversity, inclusion, and equity framework in the areas of education and training; research; and operations.

Equity: An increasingly common definition used in philanthropy is the promotion of justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Stakeholders identified issues and concerns related to equity that may affect the strategic mission and operation of the School, including, but not limited to:
- Educational costs, affordability of higher education; accessibility to high quality education regardless of ability to pay; student debt burden
- Poverty, the growing wealth gap, and the need for a living wage
- Impact of disparities in health, education and criminal justice on student, staff, faculty composition and climate
- Racial equity challenges, particularly as it pertains to learning experiences, professional growth and advancement, and resource allocation
- Budgetary support for racial equity work within the School

The Brown School has only recently engaged in explicit equity efforts. We must seek to transform social justice aspirations into deeper levels of strategic actions to assure equity, diversity and inclusion.

Options

1. Update the strategic plan to include an explicit focus on equity. Addressing equity requires an understanding of the root causes of inequality and inequity within our society. For example while it is important to understand bias, understanding how bias leads to systemic forces that produce inequity is needed to identify appropriate solutions to address these forces.

2. Adopt an equity framework that can be applied across academic degree programs, research agendas, and internal departments and committees. This framework would guide goal setting, change strategies, and the development of metrics to assess progress and inform future initiatives. There are a number of frameworks from a variety of disciplines that could inform this work. Highlighted below are three such frameworks from disparate areas to stimulate thinking about the range of options available, and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

   - The Social Justice Framework is most closely associated with the field of Education and the work of Marilyn Cochran-Smith, but informs many equity efforts in the field of social work. The focus of the social justice framework is on the analysis and understanding of oppression, privilege, and isms, as well as how society is organized as a result of historical, institutionally sanctioned stratification along sex, gender, economic, racial/ethnic, etc. lines. Hence, strategy is often focused on self-reflection and education on anti-oppression and ways to challenge established hierarchies. These efforts have often failed to provide a specific set of strategies and skills to facilitate institutional change, but more recent efforts are directed toward policy analysis and change.

   - *RESPECT Framework and Tool Kit* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation provides understanding, knowledge and strategies based on their efforts to address equity in the philanthropic field. The framework acknowledges that there are many paths that can lead to greater equity and inclusion, as organizations may be working from different starting points. The Casey Foundation's approach to operationalizing equity emphasizes exploring where to begin, how to bring everyone along, and how to envision what a more equitable operation should look like. In its lessons learned, the Foundation emphasizes clear communication and a concrete direction, the use of data to overcome emotional responses to the issue and to guide goal setting and strategy development and innovation.

   - There has been a significant focus on equity in the health and public health arena and the World Health Organization Conceptual Framework for Action on the social determinants of health moves the discussion beyond health. The framework acknowledges that education, economic, labor, transportation, agriculture, etc. policies are not primarily designed for health, but have significant implications for health. To guide and support change, equity efforts focus on empirical work to enhance understanding of the mechanisms by which social determinants produce health inequalities and to guide policy-making to identify leverage points for interventions and policies. While the focus is often explicitly health inequity, the knowledge generated, strategies identified and empirical focus have application across disciplines. National standards have been promulgated for the U.S. by the National Institute for Minority Health Disparities.

3. Promote a culture of equity within the Brown School. This includes the institutionalization of School, administrative, faculty, staff and student accountability for progress on equity, as well as diversity and inclusion goals. Key capacity building and training across the school, as well as strategic curriculum changes may be required. Members of the Brown School community will build capacity to promote equity within the school, in addition to producing well-trained students with an understanding of a critical equity lens and are positioned to advance equity in multiple sectors. One possible strategy for building capacity is to hire prominent equity researchers, in addition to assessing what other supports are needed to ensure that the Brown School is an equity leader in research.

An effort to lead in the area of equity requires consideration of the School's three areas of functioning: education, research and operations.

Education
- Create a standardized approach to social justice curriculum for the School
- Review syllabi for the inclusion of the work of diverse scholars
- Continue support for faculty capacity to integrate racial/ethnic/international topics, examples, and assignments in the classroom

Research
- Promote research that seeks to address historic, systemic inequity in social and economic status, particularly related to the development of assets (both financial and social)
- Support current university and Brown School equity scholarly initiatives (CREE, CRISMA, Homegrown STL, SMART Africa)
- Assess diversity, equity, and inclusion scholarly products (publications, collaborations, courses) produced by faculty, staff, and students

Operations
- Evaluate recruitment, hiring, promotion, and compensation policies and practices at all levels
- Promote level setting in negotiating during hiring and promotion to help level the playing field (particularly for first generation, people of color and women scholars, and staff) and address pay equity gaps
- Provide ongoing training and resources for student supports that recognize the broad and shifting diversity of student experiences, including international and underrepresented students

Short- and Long-term Plans

Framework selection (Immediate)
If a framework is adopted to guide an equity focus, it must provide direction and specificity of action related to curriculum and training, research and operations. In addition, consistent with the School's evidence-based orientation, a guiding framework for equity should leverage current understanding, knowledge and strategy, while allowing for vision and innovation. In selecting an Equity Framework, it may be useful for the faculty to consider the following three questions:
1. *What is the supporting evidence for the framework?*
2. *Does the framework suggest or outline strategies/applications for change across School functions?*
3. *Is the framework consistent with the One School orientation?*

Assess Current Practices, Set Goals, Determine Metrics, and Analyze Disaggregated Data (1-2 years)
Close examination of disaggregated data is vital to progress toward equity. Multiple frameworks advocate for a greater emphasis on data to drive goals and progress monitoring. Systematically and strategically addressing equity requires a culture of accountability that includes identifying measures and indicators to validate that equity efforts focus more on outcomes than outputs. Tracking, collecting, and critically examining data and change efforts will help to ensure that our strategies are evidence-based. In addition, the evidence-based approach also takes into account the experiences of our constituents and the culture of our School, while allowing for innovation and new ideas.
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment/audit to identify gaps in equity and root causes – practices, policies, and common beliefs that contribute to inequity
- Engage stakeholder groups (faculty, students, staff, other stakeholders) in the development of data-driven equity outcomes and goals (subjective and objective) that are:
- In alignment with University recommendations, adopt and customize the Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations around the World, as a longitudinal assessment tool (this instrument is designed to establish baselines and then measure improvement across a comprehensive set of diversity and inclusion domains) & adhere to the chosen equity framework.
- Collaborate with the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity and the Academy for Diversity, Inclusion and Equity to integrate recommendations set out in the Commission on Diversity and Inclusion's report and establish indicators of success related to diversity, equity and inclusion & monitor progress.

Estimated Costs

Staffing Needs
Staff to assist in equity related data collection, analysis and interpretation; student staff to broaden support for a more inclusive domestic and international student body.

Training Costs
Increased financial aid support; training to assure understanding and fidelity to the agreed upon equity framework.

Research Support
Financial support for piloting practices that lead to scholarly products.

Appendix A: Definitions of Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity: The Brown School recognizes the complexity of diversity and inclusion and affirms the many perspectives that are held by our community. In line with the stated values of social work and public health professions, we hold social justice and equity as guiding principles in our quest for diversity and inclusion at the Brown School. At a minimum, we believe that any definition of diversity must include the following considerations:

1. **Diversity as a fact**. One need only consider the tremendous biodiversity of the natural world to appreciate the vast variety of life, including human beings. Diversity is not something that we humans manufacture, but it is something that we must work to appreciate, foster and safeguard.
2. **Diversity and inclusion as verbs**. Because diversity must be appreciated and fostered, we consider inclusion to be a conscious activity that must inform all of the work that we do. We also appreciate how diversity and inclusion enriches our teaching, research, and service to the world.
3. **Diversity and inclusion as historically situated**. We recognize that our work to respect diversity and to include all in our community has roots in a history that has privileged certain groups while excluding others. We also recognize the present-day legacy of this history and work to address its detrimental effects through our teaching, practice, research, and service.
4. **Diversity and inclusion as a reflection of power**. The relative power afforded to individuals and groups within our community and in the larger society makes us vigilant to advance the voices and needs of the marginalized. We seek to use our power wisely to ensure that our School takes full advantage of all its members' talents and perspectives.

Inclusion: This term is often used to reference the extent to which individuals of diverse perspectives and backgrounds participate in the decision-making processes of groups, organizations and institutions. Presence does not equal inclusion; inclusive groups are likely diverse, yet diverse groups may or may not be inclusive. Stakeholder identified issues suggest the need to consider our interactions and respect for difference as we diversify our School, thereby requiring deeper consideration of inclusion.

- Engage in intersectional and more global conversations.
- Facilitate development of global competency and eliminate micro-aggressions and outright dismissal or disdain for international students.
- Provide resources to support global research and international students' financial needs;
- Authentically address racial and cultural identity; create more spaces for minority opinions.