



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BROWN UNIVERSITY

CHRISTINA H. PAXSON, PRESIDENT

September 18, 2020

Dear Members of the Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Board,

Thank you for your service on the Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Board (DIOB) during the 2019-2020 academic year. The DIOB performs an important function in ensuring that there is clear and transparent oversight of Brown's efforts to create and sustain a more diverse and inclusive community.

We are writing in response to your annual memo dated May 5, 2020. It is our hope that our response helps inform the work of the DIOB in the coming academic year. Before commenting on the substance of the memo, we want to note a few initiatives that will take place this year, which are relevant to the DIOB.

The first initiative is the development of Phase II of the *Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan* (DIAP) led by the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity. The objective of Phase II is to assess which of the goals of the DIAP require more concerted attention in the coming years and establish strategies for making progress on those goals. Given the DIOB's charge to highlight areas of the DIAP in which Brown can improve, we anticipate that the DIOB will play an important role in providing feedback to the Phase II plan before it is released. The Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity will engage you in this process.

The second initiative concerns Brown's role in addressing the persistence of anti-Black racism in society. Your memo was written just before a summer of devastating racial violence, including multiple instances of police brutality against Black people. These terrible and tragic incidents have further raised awareness of the depth and severity of anti-Black racism in the United States. As you know, Associate Professor Andre Willis and Vice President of Institutional Equity and Diversity Shontay Delalue will co-chair a Task Force this year that will make recommendations on how Brown can advocate against anti-Black racism as well as work on education and prevention efforts. The purview of this Task Force will be distinct from, but complementary to, the charge of the DIOB. Although some of the recommendations of the Task Force are likely to be reflected in aspects of Phase II of the DIAP, others will be stand-alone projects or initiatives. We encourage you to stay informed about the Task Force's activities as the year progresses to ensure alignment between both groups.

In addition to the Task Force, we have launched "*Race &*" in America, a panel discussion series curated by Brown's Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America in partnership with the Office of the Provost. This series draws on the expertise of Brown scholars to investigate the origins, history and enduring contemporary effects of racism in America from a range of fields and scholarly perspectives. We hope you engage in this series that seeks to advance knowledge and understanding and promote a more just and inclusive community and world.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank you for the preparation of such a thoughtful memo in May. We were especially pleased that the committee acknowledged the progress that has been made on increasing the fraction of Brown faculty, graduate students and staff from historically underrepresented groups (HUGs). Although Brown can be proud of these achievements, we strongly agree with your assessment that there is much more work to be done, including, but not limited to, improving Brown's ability to attract and to provide access to HUG undergraduate students and medical students so as to achieve the substantial and real educational benefits of a diverse student body.

With respect to undergraduate admissions, we have asked the Office of College Admission to develop an internal strategy and plan to attract and recruit a more diverse undergraduate student body, with a focus on increasing applications and yields for African American/Black students. We would like the DIOB to confidentially review and provide feedback on this initiative, which we expect will be completed by the middle of the fall semester.

Our sense is that, for medical students, one of the major impediments to increasing diversity is a lack of financial aid. The pandemic — which has had a disproportionate effect on communities of color — has further highlighted the need for more underrepresented clinicians entering into the medical profession, making this an opportune time to focus on fundraising for financial aid for medical students. In addition to compositional diversity, we are also aware of concerns about the climate for Brown medical students of color, especially Black medical students, and the way that issues of race are incorporated into medical education. The Warren Alpert Medical School is taking these concerns very seriously. Recently, Dean Jack Elias announced that he has created a new role for a Senior Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, who will work closely with other senior administrators, faculty and students to address these concerns. Vice President Shontay Delalue is serving in this role on an interim basis while a national search is conducted.

Finally, your memo highlighted a desire to see more fine-grained data analyses that provide information on the areas within the University where more attention to compositional diversity and/or climate is needed. We are fortunate that this year a postdoctoral scholar will conduct data analysis on equity and diversity matters, under the direction of the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity. We encourage the DIOB to meet with this researcher early in the fall term to discuss potential areas of analysis.

Again, we want to thank you for your service and commitment to diversity and inclusion at Brown. Your contributions to the Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Board are essential to helping us achieve our diversity and inclusion goals. We look forward to the important progress we will make together in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Christina H. Paxson
President

Richard M. Locke
Provost