



BROWN

May 4, 2021

Dear President Paxson and Provost Locke:

As you know, the Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Board (DIOB) is composed of a mix of faculty, staff, and students and is meant to represent the interests of the larger campus community in the successful implementation of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). Each year, we meet with administrative leaders on the campus to discuss the progress their units have made on the DIAP. This year, we met monthly with Shontay Delalue, the Vice President of the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, to review and discuss DIAP II. We also met with: Provost Rick Locke, Dean Leah Van Wey of the School of Professional Studies, Dean Rashid Zia of the College, Kevin McLaughlin, the Dean of the Faculty, Jack Elias, then the Dean of the Medical School, and Amanda Bailey, who was then the Vice President for Human Resources. We also met separately on a monthly basis to consider our own recommendations and to frame our own questions about the progress made on the DIAP and the changes made in DIAP II. We drafted this memo from our shared notes and collaborated on its articulation.

We note for the record that, as was true last year, we have submitted a confidential memo alongside this public document.

In the midst of these meetings, we were glad to receive DIAP II, a retooling of the original plan to account for the completion of some action items dating back to 2016 and the need to better calibrate goals, shifting some of our focus to the challenges of inclusion, safety, and empowerment. We commend outgoing Vice President, Shontay Delalue, and Assistant Vice President, Chloe Poston, along with the team at OIED, for their work on this document. And we are pleased to see that so much progress has been made, and that such a retooling is necessary.

Among the many action items listed in DIAP II, two stand out. In the first, we see that the Office of College Admission “will implement a plan to increase the representation of Black/African American applicants in the Early and Regular Decision pools, and increase the undergraduate Regular Decision yield for Black/African American-identified students to 50% over the next five years.” We were pleased to see such ambition in print. The DIOB has been one voice among many encouraging the development of such a plan. We hope to receive it from Dean Powell as soon as is reasonable. In the second, we see that “OIED will partner with the Office of Institutional Research to establish a University-level commitment to disaggregate data by race and gender whenever possible and convene a working group to design and implement a plan to

seek data collection on religion, sexual orientation, disability, and gender identity while maintaining privacy and confidentiality.” Commitments to robust and broad-based data collection have been an annual feature of this memo, and we are gratified to see the establishment of a centralized, campus-level working group, and we believe that such a working group will resolve some of the challenges of data collection - the asymmetries, the unevenness, and the lack of routinization - in our fairly decentralized landscape.

This memo does not usually comment on every single meeting we have, but Dean McLaughlin’s visit was critically important. Faculty hiring has been one of the most central and ambitious goals of the DIAP, and it is one we watch very closely as an index of annual progress. Impressively, this year we were able to see granular data at the department level, tracing the hiring and retention of HUG faculty forward from 2015 to the present. We were able to identify specific departments - Education, most prominently - with rapid and impressive change. And we were able to see figures on recruitment and retention at the department level, too. This kind of data collection should be fully routinized by the VPIED, and the results of it - in some form or another - shared out with Chairs, Directors, and Deans, at the very least. And perhaps with CFED as well. It is clear from this data that some departments are excelling in the extraordinarily hard work of hiring and retention.

It is less clear, though, how we might measure inclusivity at the department level for faculty of color and HUG faculty more specifically. That work remains to be theorized and completed.

Recruitment and retention are just a part of the story of the past several years. When the subject turned to the tenure and promotion of HUG faculty, Dean McLaughlin expressed the need to ensure that hidden labor is captured for faculty of color, and also that the Tenure, Promotion, and Appointments Committee (TPAC) needs clearer guidance on how to count the evidence of the same. We were pleased to hear that his office has been working diligently to advise TPAC on what cannot be seen in the annual reviews and tenure dossiers of junior faculty of color up for reappointment or tenure and promotion. We endorse his commitment to ensuring that every case is built well, that departments adhere to the very best practices across campus. We also endorse his belief that we need to more comprehensively bring that hidden labor into the light, and have it be factored into annual reviews and the tenure and promotion cases of those faculty of color we’ve worked so assiduously to recruit into our community.

We believe that his office could, as a part of its broadening data collection effort, consider whether HUG faculty (or faculty of color) are able to equitably access the full range of support structures the DOF provides, from tenure extensions to teaching and family leaves. Finally, we encourage the DOF and DOC offices to jointly explore the possible relationship between the diversification of faculty, the diversification of specific concentrations, and the diversification of general undergraduate pathways through the curriculum on campus. Where we see enhanced faculty diversity, we wonder, do we also find increased undergraduate diversity? Or inclusion?

Our meeting with the Dean of the College was equally revealing. Dean Zia has roughly one hundred people working with him in the Dean of the College office. Within the office, he has sought to ensure that there are sound hiring practices, a smart onboarding process, routine job audits, and clear pathways to promotion. Zia has modelled a reflexive hiring process, in which

conversations about diversity are ongoing; current staff openings are released as a cluster, with internal pool reports on demographics, as with much attention as possible to compositional diversity. He has organized antiracist training for the staff. “Our institution today was not designed to serve the students we have,” he told us, explaining that acknowledgements like this require action. Revisiting many of the programs that support undergraduate research, for instance, Zia found that hallmark initiatives weren’t originally built to sustain equity. So he changed them. For him, the issue of equitable resource allocation was just as important as whether new and exciting research findings emerged from SPRINT or UTRA relationships. To ensure this equity - to ensure, that is, that we moved beyond a paradigm where students need to get past hurdles and obstacles - his office changed the application process to make it easier for students to be matched to projects, which dramatically changed who was applying for these awards - and who was receiving them. The goal, as he explained it to us, is to ensure the best match between faculty and student researchers, and to eliminate whatever implicit favoritism adheres to students who bring privilege within them into the application process.

We found the same spirit of self-reflection in Dean Leah VanWey of the School of Professional Studies. Like Dean Zia, Dean VanWey took the time after taking her relatively new position to investigate the structure of her office, and to reconfigure it to match the needs of her school - and the imperatives of the DIAP. This meant collecting new data, providing new antiracist training, interrogating old assumptions and practices - and doing the same for the programs and units with which her office interfaces. The result is a comprehensively re-imagined School of Professional Studies, with impressively advancing numbers of HUG staff and new priorities that match our university’s diversity and inclusion ambitions. We were struck, reflecting back on this meeting, by her transparency and open-mindedness.

Our visits with Deans McLaughlin, Zia, and VanWey confirmed something for us: one major, comprehensive takeaway from this year’s meetings - which have confirmed a long term trend - is the importance of intellectual curiosity about diversity and inclusion in major administrative appointments. The most thoughtful and constructive engagements with the DIAP have come from those administrators who have a relentless curiosity about what has been done right in their units, what has been done wrong, and how it might be done better. Their presentations to our group have been markedly different, revealing how they’ve taken up their positions with a determination to not merely do “more,” but to think carefully about the ways in which their offices might be reconfigured or their initiatives might be reshaped to better address inequities and exclusions. Examples include the three deans mentioned above, as well as Eric Estes, the VP for Campus Life, who we met with last year. We’re deep enough in the DIAP now to be able to see best practices emerge. Hiring senior administrators who profess to care about diversity and inclusion is important, but it is better to hire administrators who are both committed *and* curious, who interrogate their own assumptions and those of the institutions they direct, who want to do something more and something better than just throw “more” at what is seen as “a problem.”

We have witnessed the departure of three major administrative leaders this year - the heads of OIED, HR, and the Medical School. Marie Williams has just arrived to serve as VP for Human Relations, and we will be filling those other positions soon. We should ensure that the replacement for Shontay Delalue has the opportunity and institutional support to see and drive the campus conversations about diversity and inclusion. We should ensure that the

as-yet-unnamed Dean of the School of Medicine and the incoming Vice President for Human Resources demonstrate a sincere commitment to the spirit and the letter of the DIAP. More than that - with everything that we've learned in mind - we should prioritize the appointment of administrators who are both passionate and curious, driven to build on the work we've completed and relentlessly introspective and questioning about what is left to be completed. We should make the same commitment when we seek to replace Colonel Mark Porter of DPS and Marlina Duncan of the Graduate School, for example, or any senior administrator in the university.

Having shared these broad suggestions, we specifically need to focus on Human Resources. We recognize that personnel changes have slowed this effort, but it is nevertheless true that we now have very precise data on faculty recruitment, retention, and promotion, but nothing similar for staff. We don't have key data points about the retention, advancement, and loss of HUG staff, and still don't have a demographic breakdown of HUG/non-HUG staff by rank and grade in each division. This means that we - as a campus - are able to have conversations about students and faculty that we simply cannot have about staff. Over time, this asymmetry - a reflection of the turnover at the top of HR - will have real consequences for all of us. We hope that incoming Vice President of Human Resources Williams can make rapid strides to make up for lost time. Staff represent the largest share of University employees and staff hiring - even temporary hiring to meet short term goals - can profoundly impact the campus community and the greater Providence community. Put simply, as we draw HR into the sweep of the DIAP, we need to make sure that we have the equivalent data for staff that we have for faculty and students, and we need to use this data to better demonstrate that we care as much about this part of our community.

The School of Medicine also deserves our attention. There, in striking contrast to the compositional gains made by the Graduate School and the ambitions expressed in DIAP II for the undergraduate student body, we've seen only minimal gains - with just a 1.1% increase in the number of URiM students from 2014 to 2020. DIAP II has only minimal goals for the Medical School, with no specific targets for increasing the yield or total percentage of URiM students. We recognize that there have been some gains made among the non-clinical faculty and the number of house staff/fellows from groups that are underrepresented in medicine. We also acknowledge that the school has a unique structure and partnerships that extend well beyond Brown. Still, we urge the next Dean of the School of Medicine to engage the DIAP with as much ambition and determination as those leaders mentioned above - with curiosity, transparency, open-mindedness, and passion. This means demonstrating, materially and affectively, a long term vision for realignment with the DIAP, and it means robust engagement with students, faculty, and staff to ensure that any such realignment is both seen and felt. In the age of a pandemic that has spotlighted numerous inequalities, this is a uniquely urgent matter.¹

As we drafted this report, we were mindful of two backdrops. The first of these, of course, is the staccato drumbeat of Black death and the general routinization of anti-Black violence nationally. We look forward to receiving the recommendations of the Anti-Blackness Task Force, and we assume those recommendations will parallel those of DIAP II, and that they will shape campus conversations about the future.

¹ These numbers are pulled from the "Medical Student Enrollment" table, found on page 22 of DIAP Phase II Report.

The second backdrop is the surging violence and hate directed at Asian Americans. The murders in Atlanta and the cruelties elsewhere are a reminder that anti-Asian violence has a long, terrible history in this country, even if most news outlets link this story only to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anti-Asian violence deserves an institutional response, even if that response falls outside of the DIAP. We believe that the moral charge to robustly increase our commitment to diversity and inclusion is broadly expressed in everything we do at Brown, going beyond the DIAP and Building on Distinction, and feel that it is imperative in this moment for the institution to make data-driven decisions about how to make marginalized faculty, students, and staff more numerous - and how to make them feel safe, welcome, and included. After all, Brown has expressed that “[i]t is imperative that all members of our community — regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, political views, physical ability and other aspects of their identities — are accepted, valued and provided with equal opportunities to thrive at Brown.” Even if Asian American students, faculty, and staff do not fall technically under the HUG definition, we should accept our responsibility when it comes to fostering safety and belonging. This work can start as a parallel to the DIAP II, with the quick and thorough scrutiny of Asian American underrepresentation demographically among the faculty and student body, conducted as we work with Asian American faculty, students, alums, and their allies to determine how to address their inclusion materially and affectively.

These twinned backdrops - the percussive violence of anti-Blackness, the resurgence violence against Asian Americans - have given us every reason to believe that the spring of 2021 was a miserable semester for students, faculty, and staff of color at Brown. As we have met this year, we have shared our own sense of things, recalling students on zoom, or on email, asking for relief and flexibility, looking haggard or flatlined. To be truly responsive to the call for inclusion we need to imagine some way as a campus community to discern, in real time and with good data, when our community members of color are in crisis. We know you feel the same. And we look forward to working with you on this.

Sincerely,

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