



May 11, 2018

Dear President Paxson and Provost Locke:

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. The board is charged to review the progress of departments, schools, and non-academic units on their localized diversity and inclusion action plans (DDIAPs), to review survey data and studies on diversity and inclusion at Brown, to make recommendations on changes or additions to data collection efforts, to help to prepare the Annual Report on the DIAP in consultation with relevant bodies, and to share news of progress on the larger university-wide plan (DIAP).

This year, we met monthly with Shontay Delaloue, the Vice President of the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, to review and discuss drafts of the Annual Report. We also met separately to consider our own recommendations and to frame our own questions about the progress made on the DIAP. We drafted this memo from our shared notes.

Before listing our recommendations and questions, we should first acknowledge that the campus has worked incredibly hard to enable and realize diversity and inclusion on the original terms of the DIAP. We see meaningful impacts on the hiring of faculty, the expansion of student services through Counseling and Psychological Services and Campus Life more generally, and the commitment of new resources and more focused efforts from the office of the Dean of the College, the Swearer Center, the Sheridan Center, and the First-Generation College and Low-Income Student Center, among others. Individual academic departments and academic centers have made great strides, resulting in new courses, new faculty, and expansive new programming.

However, great and considerable challenges remain. Based on our back-of-the-envelope calculations, meeting the faculty hiring goals set out in the DIAP will require us to

sustain the pace of the last two years' extraordinary work - even though hiring efforts might well be focused on departments and units where such a pace could be, for many reasons, more difficult. For those who have been taking up this work seriously, fatigue is a short-term and long-term problem. The second largest segment of our campus community (after students) - the over three thousand staff persons who ensure that Brown operates smoothly - is seemingly untouched by much of this progress. It is difficult to know whether - and if so, how - undergraduate and graduate students are aware of the changes on campus.

Some questions, comments, and concerns, all of which are intended to be, again, constructive:

1. Our need for a clearer understanding of the scope of Brown's fundraising hinders our evaluation of the Annual Report. We are left to wonder the following:
  - Have efforts to secure funding been successful?
  - Is the university's DIAP on track to be fully supported?
  - If not, in these first few years, have we been most successful in low-cost but time-intensive areas?
  - Have we had to temporarily re-allocate resources and how long can we sustain those reallocations?

It does seem like certain aspects of the plan - for instance, the presidential postdoctoral fellowship program, which is now to be funded through a cost-share with departments - might be lagging behind other features. Acknowledging that it is impossible to share every detail with the campus, it is important to know what is working and where there are successes - and equally important to find out where there may be need for redoubled-effort or even re-thinking. We believe the campus community would benefit from learning what is and isn't working and from hearing how the Office of Advancement plans to weave diversity and inclusion more comprehensively into its fundraising efforts.

2. The DIAP laid out ambitious, 10-year faculty-hiring goals. An update of whether or not we are on track to meet those goals will be critical to ensuring that Brown is making adequate progress in this area. It would be helpful to identify if certain divisions (the humanities, the social sciences, or the life sciences) are more on track than others and if so, what needs to be done to ensure that we get

everyone on track. Are additional resources required? Are there other kinds of university commitments that can be marshalled?

3. No single issue seems more pressing this year than the need for an action plan to improve climate for staff. Section I.4 in “Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion” narrowly stresses the need to improve communications and to pilot new initiatives, while the broader language of the document emphasizes more comprehensive approaches that will benefit everyone. The administrative DDIAP for Human Resources generally prioritizes the need for more knowledge and clarity about existing policies, but eschews greater detail about improving the material conditions of diversity and inclusion. The climate survey now circulating should encourage a proactive, ambitious approach. Is there a permanent mechanism for problem-solving? What can reasonably be done to improve retention efforts? What do peer institutions do? What is the best national model? Are there relatively simple things - like allowing staff to take classes for free at Brown, creating and codifying broader pathways to advancement, allowing staff to have maternity leave before their fourth year of employment - that would make a significant difference? Can HR adopt more flexible approaches for rewarding, promoting, and retaining staff? What can we learn from our peers on how best to enhance employee engagement and improve the working environment for our staff? Can the campus enact new training modules for faculty to improve relations with staff? Finally, improving staff morale seems partially dependant on the hiring of a new head of Human Resources. What is the timeline for that to be complete? As we tried this year to answer these questions without a well-defined Brown plan, we’ve been drawn to this retention [model](#), this [study](#) on employee engagement, and this [example](#) of “best practices.” We are obviously not the people to draw up an action plan for staff, but we hope to see something robust soon.
4. We have lingering questions remaining about the category of “HUG,” especially when it comes to staff. When it comes to faculty and students, we have a clearer sense of the histories of under-representation, and a sharper definition of where to target efforts at recruitment and retention. But for staff, we are still confused about what counts as underrepresented, whether there are critical distinctions across units and ranks, and what measures are needed to address the need for diversity and inclusion. As a consequence, coupled with the absence of a truly granular action plan, we found it even harder to think about diversity and inclusion within the larger category of staff.

5. A few questions, looking forward, about campus priorities and about metrics that reveal progress and struggle: Are we making more progress on the campus-wide DIAP than we are on the departmental or unit DDIAPs? Are student and staff concerns being addressed at the departmental level with a different urgency than at the campus level? How would we measure progress on both fronts? Should progress on the departmental DDIAPs be centered in the Annual Report?
  
6. In order to fully realize the vision set out in the DIAP of building an inclusive campus, we need a renewed focus on how to better support Brown community members with disabilities. This, too, deserves a more granular operational plan, or at least an articulation of areas to be addressed. We recall that last year's DIOB memo encouraged the campus to conduct an accessibility survey of the built environment. Is such a survey planned and when might it be complete and shared with the community? We also need to do more than focus on improving building accessibility. Can the campus produce recommendations highlighting the ways in which we may fall short in supporting students, staff and faculty with disabilities? Can we develop modules for competency training for faculty and staff? What work is already being done by community members to support students and staff with disabilities, and how can Brown bolster it? Can we issue a climate survey to the relevant constituencies? Or regularly distribute staff and faculty protocols. Is there a best national model (For example, the Disability Cultural Center at University of Illinois at Chicago). Finally and most conceptually, what is the relationship between our efforts on this front and the bigger and broader commitment to the cultivation of an inclusive campus environment for the most marginalized members of our community.
  
7. Relatedly, the DIAP lays out a series of broad university goals and ambitions, but it contains little detail about how we will assess progress along the way, and call out successes and failures. The work has, in many ways, fallen to those individuals who are willing to step up - often beyond the scope of their roles and sometimes taxing themselves beyond the limits of their capacity. Recognizing that accountability is a central feature of the DIAP, we encourage you to find some way to highlight the individual triumphs, to be transparent about what is not working perfectly, and to compel more of an effort from those who are not shouldering the load in what was meant to be a campus-wide commitment to diversity and inclusion. Meeting the ambitious goals set out in the DIAP and living up to that commitment will require more from more people across campus. For those who are already doing that work, forms of recognition might

- go a long way to improving climate and sustaining high morale. The OIED awards mentioned in the Annual Report (and just recently announced) are one possible way to address these issues, to call out the significance of having good people in the right places, people who've bought into the DIAP as a university mission.
8. We should also be recognizing and honoring what we've learned in our departments and lifting that knowledge up so the campus community can see it, to both recognize the effort and disseminate the lessons learned. It would be useful to pull together successful units across divisions and ask them to document best practices or even to host broader conversations about the challenges that confront field-locked departments.
  9. The university could also even more strongly incentivize participation by re-allocating resources to those areas where diversity *and* excellence have been most powerfully manifested.
  10. The AY 2018-2019 provides the campus with a unique opportunity. Students who entered Brown in the dramatic fall of 2015 will be moving into the final year here. Given all the work that has been done on the DIAP, we encourage a class-specific survey of this cohort, one aimed at determining how the changes we see documented in the Annual Report have been lived and felt by the students who were present at the start of this moment of institutional transformation. Measuring this sort of "felt change" might be of uncertain utility - but it also might be incredibly revealing.
  11. We appreciate the revisions to the process this year, which enabled us to take more time to work with the VPOIED on the annual report. An additional suggestion: we wonder whether releasing the DIOB memo to the public along with your response might be useful to the campus community? Since progress varies considerably by department and unit, more prominently releasing the memo and your response would help the entire Brown community to become more aware of everything that is happening.

To close, the promise of the original Diversity and Inclusion Action plan was that it defined change in global terms. It asked us all to imagine a more diverse and more inclusive up-to-date iteration of Brown, but it also encouraged us to envision how we might make these transformations durable. It was clear from the start that none of this would be easy. Continuing the work of the DIAP and DDIAPs, we know, will take courage and imagination and commitment.

We very much appreciate our role in this process. We recognize the great effort that has gone into the last few years. And we hope for continued, compounding successes in the future.

Signed:

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