



BROWN

May 19, 2019

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 in the successful implementation of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. The board is charged to review the progress of departments, schools, and non-academic units on their localized diversity and inclusion action plans, 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.

This year, to meet this charge, we met monthly with Shontay Delalue, the Vice President of the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, to review and discuss drafts of the Annual Report. We met with Tracy Barnes from the Office of Institutional Research, with Amanda Bailey, the Vice President of Human Relations, with Andrew Campbell, the Dean of the Graduate School, with Logan Powell, the Dean of Admission, and with Kevin McLaughlin, the Dean of the Faculty. Provost Locke joined us for a meeting, as well. 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. We drafted this memo from our shared notes and collaborated on its articulation.

In what follows, we make assessments of progress on faculty hiring and graduate student diversification, human resources, undergraduate admissions, and data collection, and make recommendations for each.

**Faculty Hiring and Graduate Diversification:**

As the DIAP moves into its fourth year, we see this as a critical moment for reflection, retooling, and redirection. We are pleased that the campus has worked incredibly hard to enable and realize diversity and inclusion, with some progress worth celebrating. This year, two notable successes occurred: the rapid diversification of the graduate student population on campus, and the successful recruiting of

HUG faculty at rates that likely put us on track to meet the DIAP goals. According to Dean McLaughlin, prior to the implementation of the DIAP, annual recruitment of HUG faculty (outside of the Schools of Medicine, Public Health, and, until this year, Engineering) lingered between 16% (AY 2012-2013) and 12% (AY 2014-2015). Since the fall of 2015, though, annual HUG faculty recruitment has surged to 31% (AY 2015-2016), 42% (AY 2016-2017), 21% (AY 2017-2018), and 29% (2018-2019). Though the Dean noted the existence of near-constant pushback from some faculty and departments, these are impressive results.

The effort to spur HUG hiring through cluster recruitment efforts - in the past two years in African American literature and culture and in Carceral Studies - is laudable and should be expanded. Units with existing vacancies or where new growth is possible could be encouraged to work proactively across departmental lines on cluster proposals, which might be seen as improvised, opportunistic, and short-term action plans that might run parallel to existing hiring priorities and stake out new scholarly territory.

Dean Campbell shared similar news from the Graduate School and indicated that graduate recruitment was proceeding more rapidly, in part because departments had the flexibility to make admissions decisions based on their DDIAP priorities. For example, as the Annual Report notes, 31% of the incoming cohort of domestic graduate students comes from historically underrepresented groups, up 18% from the previous year. This, too, is a substantial and laudable achievement.

Recommendation: In meeting with us, Dean McLaughlin rightly noted the relationship between faculty hiring and graduate recruitment, through which success in hiring HUG faculty often leads, a year or two later, to a surge in HUG applications for MA and PhD programs. We anticipate, following his lead, that cluster hiring might accelerate this trend in new and exciting ways. And we believe this is yet another reason to encourage units across campus to collaborate with his office on proposals for multi-departmental hiring plans. The long-term challenge, as always, is to think of ways to make this sort of change durable. Vigorously structured cultures of mentorship and retention and promotion are one solution. The attachment of research clusters/hiring clusters to existing centers and institutes - or the expansion of those centers and institutes to match the clusters - are other possibilities. We think it wise, looking down the road, for the university to proactively consider how else we might cement these gains into Brown's future.

Recommendation: The hiring of HUG regular faculty in Public Health and Biomed has been less consistent and also less dramatically successful since the advent of the DIAP. Obviously, we strongly recommend attention to this, as uneven progress across the campus will only become more difficult to address over time. (We received no data for Engineering, which has only been a distinct school for a short period).

## Human Resources:

We will be eager to see how swiftly and concretely new Vice President of Human Resources, Amanda Bailey, addresses long-standing DIOB concerns about staff/faculty relations. For years, staff across divisions have expressed a lack of respect - and even decency - from faculty members. In many cases, this disrespect can be attributed to racialized and gendered asymmetries that mark the different positions of staff and faculty and is thus fundamentally a diversity and inclusion issue.

Recommendation: In order to continue to address this, we ask that the University - and perhaps OIED - consider a formal mechanism for receiving input about faculty from staff, and ask that Vice President Bailey work with Dean McLaughlin to establish some best practices for reshaping this bad dynamic, wherein faculty often seem immunized against correction. Brown should explore existing and developing technology and methods for gauging climate and acting upon the findings.

The diversification of staff at all ranks is another critically important goal. As our staff represent our most direct commitment to our local community and are often the first to interface with our students, we would also like to ensure the diversity of our staff at *all* levels and in all categories of work, union and non-union. As the Annual Report indicates, the representation of historically underrepresented groups among the staff at Brown is just over 15%, and just under 9% in senior administrative positions.

Recommendation: Vice President Bailey, who we know is still fairly new to Brown, should explore ways to address these disparities and to ensure that mechanisms of recruitment, professional development, and promotion are working in accordance with DIAP goals.

Figure 1 in the Annual Report (p.10) indicates that some job families within the larger category of “staff” have made great strides since the inauguration of the DIAP - most notably, Development and Alumni Affairs and Finance and Research Administration - but overall numbers are still quite low. And it is unclear, from the Annual Report, how to break down the demographics of staff *within* each job family, so that we can see whether and how rank and race and gender come together. This is especially important since the DIAP mandated that the university address the diversification of staff holistically, focusing on recruitment, professional development, and mentorship aimed at advancing career opportunities. We should be able to see, over time, growing numbers of HUG staff moving into senior administrative positions. Just as critically, we should all be able to see this in data streams and data visualizations that are made public.

In addition to diversity in representation, we need to continue to work with our staff community to promote continued learning around dynamics of power, privilege and oppression. If we want to ensure

the type of campus climate that will encourage the retention of staff from historically underrepresented groups then it is incumbent upon every division to engage meaningfully with these topics. It is only by thoughtfully considering systems of oppression and the dynamics they create that we can examine our role in unconsciously perpetuating them and move toward consciously upending them.

### **Data Collection:**

It is often said that sunlight is a natural disinfectant. We understand that Brown is a transactional, face-to-face place and that it requires a degree of politeness and civility. We know that much has gone right, and we celebrate those things. But true accountability requires a full airing of everything that has not lived up to expectations or has failed, too. We think the time has come to share as much information as possible with the entire campus.

Questions of data have been central to the DIOB since it first convened three years ago. In fact, the very notion of a DIOB implies an assumption of data transparency lest the DIOB be viewed as an administrative rubber stamp. Furthermore, our charge currently includes: “Reviewing the 'monitoring progress' webpage and ensuring current data is populated and available to the Brown community.”

When we meet with the Vice President of Institutional Equity and Diversity, the conversations go well beyond the data presented in the Annual Report. Our meetings with various administrators primarily involve them sharing data relevant to their departments or divisions. Even looking back at our past memos and recommendations, we ask questions about data collection, encourage climate surveys, and make recommendations about the way all of this material is represented in the Annual Report, a necessarily brief document, which meant to be supplemented by more fulsome data collections and visualizations. We believe that this method of oversight - closed-door meetings in which information is shared and then condensed down to the more manageable size of the Annual Report - falls short of the University truly holding ourselves accountable for the progress we are making toward our goals. The entire Brown community needs to know where we are, where we are going and how we plan to get there. And to know all of that, the Brown community needs information.

We need to understand where and how the labor of implementing and ensuring progress on the DDIAP falls to underrepresented groups on campus. And we need to incentivize more inclusive buy-in on the part of the faculty. Numerous studies have shown that “diversity work” often falls to women or faculty, staff, and students of color. We hope to see, as a part of the data analysis project we are proposing, much greater clarity about who does advising - especially first-year advising, where faculty have a chance to indicate a preference for advising HUG and first-gen students - who sits on DDIAP committees, and who serves as a formal faculty mentor for new HUG faculty. The Dean of the Faculty

outlined an excellent plan to share the burden of advising as a condition of the reduction of the standard teaching load to three courses annually, but we also recommend working with TPAC to more seriously consider work on DDIAP related issues in tenure and promotion proceedings.

A commonly shared set of facts proactively assembled might also, we believe, make it easier for the DIOB to perform its oversight function, allowing it to work from the Annual Report and a new campus-wide diversity dashboard, and making it less necessary to seek out information on our own.

Recommendation: We strongly recommend the creation of a comprehensive diversity dashboard that is public-facing (at least to the Brown community) and global. A diversity dashboard that would allow us to see the heat blooms of success in recruitment and retention and promotion as well as the cold spots where progress on the action plan has not yet been made manifest. This type of comprehensive resource would need to show detail down to the departmental level on undergraduate and graduate student climate, staff climate, with diversification numbers for existing faculty, staff, and student populations and search data from the pool of applicants to the pool of finalists. The Brown community needs a dashboard to tell us not merely whether the campus as a whole is on track to meet its ambitious goals, but also whether all of its component parts are as well - from, for instance, the Schools of Medicine, Public Health, and Engineering, to Campus Life, Human Resources, and Advancement, to the divisions of the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Life Sciences. A dashboard would allow us all to compare best practices, see where new resources have flowed, recognize areas of accomplishment and troubleshoot problems. A robust, visionary dashboard - as transparent as possible, given reasonable concerns about anonymity, and going well beyond what is presently on the OIED website - might make new plans possible and also increase the confidence and trust of students towards the administration.

Some of this material, we believe, can be drawn together from existing materials at OIR, in the DOF office, from departments and through internal platforms like ASK or the FAR. But our hope is to encourage not merely the broadcast of material already assembled elsewhere, but also encourage better and more imaginative collection, interpretation, visualization and dissemination of data, as well as the routinization of new kind of data collection on campus.<sup>1</sup> We want to encourage Brown to be a leader nationally, well regarded on this front not only for the DIAP but also for the extraordinary self-scrutiny that results in new understandings of structural inequality in what has been a predominantly white institution. Continued self-scrutiny, we are saying, leads to change.

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<sup>1</sup> As an example, we discussed this: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/27/upshot/make-your-own-mobility-animation.html>

And also W.E.B. Du Bois's hundred-year-old data visualizations of racial inequality, copies of which will be given to you both with this memo.

Self-scrutiny in a community as large as ours rests on transparency. For too long, we have failed to describe, at the local level, how success looks and feels, to diagnose the root causes of failure, and to openly discuss and prescribe remedies for difficult issues. We have tried to address student and staff concerns and complaints, and structural problems at the departmental and unit level, behind closed doors. Bringing this information out into the public eye isn't a matter of "calling out" people and assigning blame; it is about ensuring that the entire campus has a shared set of facts, and a common view of the problem, and a sense of what is working really well and where. We cannot address these problems without collective buy-in and that requires that we name them openly so that we can work together as a campus community on durable, long term solutions.

Examples of the sort of data we might wish to see shared with the Brown community:

- All of the materials from the departmental diversity dashboards, and all material from OIR relevant to success of the DIAP.
- The annual release of graduate and undergraduate climate data for all units, as well as for larger divisions (Public Health, Medical School, Engineering, and the College).
- Data that showcases the evolution of departmental or unit diversification on campus, including faculty, graduate students, concentrators, and undergraduates in the classroom.
- Faculty search data from the full pool to the finalists brought to campus, showing the percentage of HUG candidates.
- A demographic breakdown of each admitted class, and the final yield, broken down by HUG status and also by financial aid commitment. We should be able to see the intersection of demographics and financial aid commitment.
- A comparison of Brown's undergraduate student demographics with our Ivy+ peers, adjusted as needed if our peers use different schemes of classification.
- A breakdown of the progress of financial donations for the DIAP and allocation of these financial resources.
- Multi-year demographic breakdown of faculty advising loads for all units on campus, including secondary or informal advising.
- Multi-year demographic breakdown of departmental teaching loads and student enrollment numbers for all units on campus.
- Some effort to visualize serious indicators of campus climate, including a map of heat blooms showing the frequency, intensity, location, and, if possible, the nature of all racial and gendered incidents.

These are merely examples, we hasten to add. We recognize that not everything can be shared. But this is a fair list of all the data points we wished for during this year's deliberations, and we hope it serves as a useful illustration.

## Undergraduate Admissions:

The original DIAP, an elaboration of “Building on Distinction,” laid out an aggressive set of goals for faculty recruitment as we sought to “double” the number of faculty from historically underrepresented or marginalized populations. It also pushed us to “develop a diverse graduate student body.” These two ambitious, demographic goals were concrete, and their ambitions have, we believe, inspired incredibly hard work across campus and some early successes that we sincerely hope will continue.

At the undergraduate level, the charge was more abstract: to “enhance diversity” for certain undergraduate populations. Nested beneath this were three very specific charges: to expand partnerships with organizations that promote college success for high school students from underrepresented communities and marginalized backgrounds; to expand resources for A Day on College Hill; and to increase the impact of Summer@Brown for those same constituencies. Dean of Admissions Logan Powell is right to be pleased with the success of his office in meeting these goals, calling our attention to Brown’s hosting of College Horizons, expanded partnerships with QuestBridge, and pilot programs for potential low-income, first generation students.

But the growth in the numbers of HUG faculty and the rapid diversification of the graduate student population cast a spotlight on those areas on campus where demographic change lags, or where we are behind our peers. And, when it comes to undergraduate enrollment, we do, in fact, seem to be behind. As the *New York Times* reported in its survey of college admissions and wealth, at Brown “more students came from the top 1 percent of the income scale than from the entire bottom 60 percent.”<sup>2</sup> A survey of Ivy League peers found that in last year’s cohort, “Brown [was] the only Ivy to admit less than half of its class as students of color with 49 percent.”<sup>3</sup> We recognize, of course, that there are definitional questions here - that “students of color” does not equate to “HUG,” for instance - but we are unclear whether those definitional questions, if resolved, would change this picture.

Indeed, we see a point of tension between the recent and much-heralded 6.6% acceptance rate for the class of 2023 (celebrated as a marker of Brown’s appeal) and what might be relatively low (for the IVY + peer group) URM/HUG enrollment. And we worry about that tension between heightened selectivity and diversification, which the DIAP - not the global DIAP nor the College Admissions DIAP - seems able to resolve.

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/18/upshot/some-colleges-have-more-students-from-the-top-1-percent-than-the-bottom-60.html>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.thedp.com/article/2019/04/ivy-league-admission-rates-penn-cornell-harvard-yale-columbia-dartmouth-brown-princeton>

The Annual Report also notes that “while there were slight increases among HUG enrollments, a breakdown of HUG representation reveals there was a slight decrease among students who identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander between 2016 and 2017.” Given the relative size of these populations, it is easy for these decreases to get overlooked, but it makes it even more critical to ensure that we do not take steps backward - that where margins are at their thinnest and our selectivity is increasing, we offer our very best effort.

Looking at recruitment mechanisms, we wonder: do we have dedicated recruiters in the right places? And by that, we mean in diverse places? Do we have the right metrics to recruit HUG students? How does our admissions process support or inhibit undocumented or low-income students from applying? Is our notion of excellence capacious enough? Dean Powell highlighted increased recruitment efforts in Texas and California and Florida, and cited the abundance of excellence to be found in those locations, but we question if the focus should be directed not simply at areas with surging high school populations, but more specifically at areas with increasing potential for diversity.

There is a problem here for the Brown community to address, where an aversion to risk-taking in admissions and establishment of orthodoxy in recruitment in middle- and upper-class zones of opportunity could be at odds with the spirit of DIAP and, as well, with the adventurous spirit of the open curriculum.

We are mindful, as well, that the DIAP rests on generations of student activism. Behind 2015, we can hear echoes of 1968, 1975, and 1985. Over the past fifty years at Brown, student activists have advocated for increased diversity in Brown’s undergraduate student population. One of the most notable, and most celebrated by the institution, is the 1968 Walkout, which students used to insist that incoming student enrollment be 11% Black, a demand that has been echoed through the years by subsequent generations of student activists. As seen in the Annual Report, Brown’s Black student body overall has hovered around 6.5% for the past four years; for comparison’s sake, Black students made up 14% of college undergraduate enrollment nationally.<sup>4</sup> Brown has a proud legacy of student advocacy and we believe that it is important to consider our students’ work and previous demands when assessing our progress.

We say this because we remember that in the original debate over the DIAP, many different approaches to the diversification of undergraduate admission were proposed. Those proposals live on the OIED website, where they serve as background context for choices we’ve made - forks in the road

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<sup>4</sup><https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>



where the campus has chosen one path over another.<sup>5</sup> Self-scrutiny means that we should be assessing whether we made the right calls back in 2015. These hauntings, if you will, reflect well on Brown's commitment to remembering its past, but they trouble our sense of success in this moment, especially when it comes to undergraduate admissions. They remind us that we've failed to meet earlier benchmarks - that we set aside a certain kind of ambition in undergraduate recruitment.

Recommendation: Why, we ask, can't one of our priorities be trying to recruit and matriculate the best and brightest HUG students? What if we set a goal - one that would acknowledge the complicated legal landscape - for HUG recruitment into each undergraduate class? This type of intention-setting would also require us to look at our existing processes to determine what barriers exist within our current system to this becoming a reality. In addition to the aforementioned aspects of recruitment, this could include the looking at our application review processes and other mechanisms as well. It could also include a review of emerging practices - like the use of environmental context dashboards and adversity metrics - that could help Brown make strides in these areas.

#### **Other recommendations:**

We strongly recommend a commitment to a democratic process in every step of the departmental review of progress made on the DDIAPs from the committees established to how the information is shared with OIED. Student, staff, and faculty stakeholders should be reviewing the documents written each summer prior to the return of their report and they should be discussed, as well, at departmental meetings. The progress on the DDIAPs should be easily accessible to members of the department - undergraduate and graduate students in particular, but staff as well.

Extra-departmental concerns like the Brown Arts Initiative and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative should have public DDIAPS, too, we believe.

#### **Conclusion:**

One original premise of the DIAP, as Dean McLaughlin reminded us, was that it allowed departments time to think about what diversification might mean locally, and how diversification might promote and enhance excellence. We find great promise in an expansion of this reflection to include, as much as possible, the entire campus community, and in the provision of new information and data to support that reflection - that is, better information drives and supports change and we feel the current availability and presentation of institutional data should be improved. We find hope in the vision of

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<sup>5</sup>These can be found here: <https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/institutional-diversity/pathways/community-input/admissions>

surging undergraduate cohorts, to match our early successes recruiting faculty and graduate students, and in the proliferation of change among staff as new leadership takes hold. We acknowledge and are grateful for those who have worked so hard, offstage and onstage, to advance diversification and inclusion on the Brown campus.

Signed,

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