



**University of Pennsylvania School of Design  
Faculty Diversity Action Plan Update  
August 2014**

**I. Introduction**

PennDesign recognizes that increasing the diversity of our community is essential to our goal of preparing students to assume leadership roles as designers, planners and artists in an increasingly global society. As an urban institution, we are committed to demonstrating how design can improve the quality of everyday life in diverse communities. Ensuring that our faculty, students and staff are representative of the communities that we serve strengthens our ability to achieve this mission.

As we have indicated in prior Faculty Diversity Action Plan updates, increasing diversity at PennDesign is challenging, given a lack of diversity among the design professions in general and the candidates from whom we draw faculty in particular. In addition, the number of underrepresented minority (URM) students applying for graduate study in design continues to be low. In response to these challenges, we have developed an ambitious yet realistic plan to increase diversity among our students, staff and faculty, while also cultivating an environment that promotes and celebrates inclusion.

**II. Increased Outreach to Underrepresented Minority Students**

One of the challenges to building a more diverse faculty is having an adequate pipeline of diverse candidates from which to recruit. In the past year, we have significantly expanded efforts to increase the number of URM applicants to PennDesign through more robust outreach and recruitment efforts at historically black colleges and other minority serving organizations, including visits to Morgan State University, the Atlanta University Center Consortium (including Clark Atlanta, Morehouse, and Spellman), and the McNair Scholars Graduate School Fair at the University of Delaware. To assist with these recruitment efforts, PennDesign's Director of Admissions assembled an informal panel of minority outreach ambassadors, composed of current URM students and faculty. On several occasions, representatives from this group accompanied her on visits to provide more in-depth information about academic as well as social and cultural aspects of the school.

In October 2013, PennDesign participated in the 2013 conference of the *National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA)* for the first time. This coming October, PennDesign will be a GoldPlus Sponsor of NOMA's 2014 annual conference, which will be held in Philadelphia. We have been working closely with NOMA over the past few months to help increase the participation of local architecture firms in the conference and to strengthen our partnership. NOMA will include a tour of the Penn campus and a presentation at the Architectural Archives in the conference program, and the main reception and keynote address will be held at the University Museum. We are hopeful that our collaboration with NOMA will help us in our efforts to recruit more minority students and faculty.

In October 2013, PennDesign hosted *Demystifying the Design Professions*, the opening event at the School's fall-semester Open House for prospective students, which was coordinated by *DiverseDesign*, a student-led group that is dedicated to fostering a PennDesign community that celebrates and promotes diversity (please see the attached copy of *DiverseDesign's* 2013-2014 brochure). *DiverseDesign's* mission statement notes,

*“We seek to engage PennDesign, Penn’s Campus and the greater Philadelphia Community to encourage new perspectives, to grow with the field to combat the inequalities that still exist within our profession and consequently the built environments around the world.”*

The goal of the event was to discuss the importance of diverse perspectives and disciplines in the design professions and at PennDesign. The day-long program included a welcome by the Dean, a student panel, a guided discussion led by DiverseDesign members and an alumni and faculty panel. We hope that this event – in addition to several other culturally specific events throughout the year (described below) – help to showcase PennDesign’s embrace of diversity and commitment to inclusion to current and prospective students.

Several PennDesign faculty members also served as guest lecturers at universities serving a large number of minority students – both here and abroad. For example, Professor Frank Matero (Historic Preservation) has been an annual lecturer at Polytechnic University in Puerto Rico, and he recently established a cooperative agreement with Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, which serves a large proportion of Native American Students. In previous years, Terry Adkins (Professor in Fine Arts) visited a number of historically black colleges and arranged meetings with student diversity groups at several other schools, and David Gouverneur (Associate Professor in Landscape Architecture) also lectures in Puerto Rico, Columbia and Venezuela. These visits provide opportunities for faculty to introduce the design professions to communities who may not otherwise have considered a career in design, planning or fine arts, in addition to promoting PennDesign. We look forward to working with faculty and our Admissions Department to increase the number of visits to colleges and universities throughout the country and the world – including minority serving institutions – in the coming academic year.

PennDesign continues to partner with the Provost’s Office to offer full-diversity fellowships each year to students in every discipline across the School. Although tuition is discounted on average by 22% for financial aid, it is difficult for us to compete with our peer institutions who are offering much more substantial aid packages to our top candidates. For the upcoming academic year, the School will be offering more fellowships and in some cases, attaching stipends or teaching assistantships to the overall package. The School has set aside \$1.27M, or 28% of its total aid to master students to attract a more diverse student body in Academic Year 2014-2015.

### **III. Recruiting A More Diverse Faculty**

Since submitting our last Faculty Diversity Plan update, PennDesign has increased the number of female standing faculty, with the appointment of Karen M’Closkey to Associate Professor with tenure in December 2013. Two new female Assistant Professors, Megan Ryerson and Francesca Ammon, joined the faculty of the Department of City and Regional Planning in July 2013.

PennDesign’s Faculty Diversity Plan highlights our commitment to ensuring that we are reaching professional, academic and alumni networks that are inclusive of underrepresented minorities (URMs) as part of our search process for new faculty. As a small school that typically conducts one or two searches per year, we do not have many opportunities to put this commitment into practice. This past fall, we conducted a search for a new junior member of the standing faculty in the Department of Architecture. As part of this search, we asked our faculty – several of whom are journal editors, members of executive boards of professional and disciplinary associations – to tap these networks and identify promising URM candidates. Networks of particular interest include: National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) and Women in Architecture. We also posted the position in *Insight Into Diversity*.

As importantly, at the start of the search in late summer 2013, Dean Marilyn Jordan Taylor made clear to the chair of the search committee the importance of affirmatively seeking women and minority applicants to include in the pool of candidates under consideration. Both the search committee chair and the school's Diversity Search Advisor (DSA) asked the standing faculty to "consider the overall gender and minority balance with each new appointment."

Finally, PennDesign's Department Coordinators, working in collaboration with PennDesign's Associate Director of Faculty Affairs, continue to complete university required Equal Opportunity Compliance forms in order to document the steps that search committees take to reach a diverse pool of potential applicants, including URMs.

#### **IV. Assessment of the Diversity Search Advisor Process**

At PennDesign, the Diversity Search Advisor (DSA) has played a critical role in helping to ensure that the school's searches are conducted in accordance with the University's policies and procedures regarding diversity and that each search committee is affirmatively identifying a diverse applicant pool that is inclusive of URM candidates. During search and personnel committee meetings, he routinely encourages faculty to explore how their unconscious bias may be affecting their decision making about potential candidates. In several instances, this has prompted meaningful debate about issues of race and bias and resulted in more thoughtful decision making about both new appointments and reappointments.

#### **V. Fostering a Culture of Inclusion**

PennDesign continues to celebrate diversity and foster a climate of inclusiveness through its global initiatives, lecture series, diverse student associations, and informal social events. PennDesign offers design studio courses and summer programs in cities around the world. The 2013-2014 lecture series features more than 50 lecture and panel discussions facilitated by internationally-recognized architects, urban planners, theorists, designers and artists from various disciplines and backgrounds. This past academic year, the series featured an even more diverse group of speakers, including Theaster Gates, an African American installation and social practice artist, Navarrow Wright, an African American expert on the impact of technology and social media on business and society; Argentine-born Architect Marcelo Spina, Cuban-born artist Guillermo Calzadilla, and Spanish architects Iñaki Ábalos, Renata Sentkiewicz, and Rafael Moneo.

In September 2013, PennDesign demonstrated the school's commitment to partnering with diverse communities by implementing IDEA Days, a two-day festival of interdisciplinary student and faculty-led projects designed in collaboration with partners from across Philadelphia to demonstrate how design can help improve the quality of everyday life. Projects focused on informal settlements in developing countries, improving after-school opportunities and encouraging community engagement among youth in West Philadelphia, teaching vaulting techniques to students from Philadelphia's Charter High School for Architecture and Design, and designing benches for a recently-cleared lot in collaboration with a homeless center in Camden. The diversity of the IDEA Days projects exemplifies PennDesign's efforts to introduce students to diverse disciplines, sectors, geographies, populations, cultures and perspectives.

This past fall, PennDesign also invited Dr. Rudie Altamirano, the Director of International Student and Scholar Services, to facilitate discussions about intercultural communication with both faculty and staff. These discussions focused on different communication styles and teaching approaches in various cultures (both international and in the U.S.) and the importance of

respecting differences and identifying personal bias when working in a multi-cultural environment.

As in years past, PennDesign used other social events, such as Dean-sponsored dinners, to promote support and networking among junior faculty. In April 2013, the Dean hosted the annual PennDesign women faculty dinner at her home. Although some of these initiatives are not specifically focused on promoting faculty diversity, they help signal the many ways that PennDesign fosters a climate of inclusivity.

## **VI. Next Steps**

In the coming year, we will continue implementing many of the initiatives listed above, with a particular focus on further expanding our recruitment efforts to potential URM students, developing a concept for a visiting minority professor and post-doctoral fellowship program, and increasing efforts to identify promising minority faculty of the future. We also plan to provide diversity and Title IX Training (offered by the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs). We look forward to keeping you apprised of our progress.