



**University of Pennsylvania School of Design  
Faculty Diversity Plan Update  
August 2016**

**I. Introduction**

Design is a global enterprise, requiring faculty, students, scholars and practitioners to engage in learning and sharing experiences with cultures, societies, clients and communities around the world. Preparing students to become leading design practitioners and scholars in a global society demands not only conceptual understanding but direct experience working with diverse disciplines, sectors, geographies, populations, cultures, and perspectives. Strengthening the diversity of our academic community is therefore essential to our educational mission in general and our focus on urban environments in particular.

The community of the School of Design includes our students, staff, Overseers, and visitors as well as our faculty. This *Faculty Diversity Plan Update* highlights our efforts in the past year to increase the diversity among all of those groups in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual and gender orientation, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, disability status, and scholarly discipline. It also summarizes our efforts to promote an inclusive culture that welcomes and celebrates difference.

**II. Recruiting A More Diverse Faculty**

In Academic Year 2016 PennDesign conducted five faculty searches, resulting in six new members of the standing faculty who will be joining us in Academic Year 2016-2017. These new faculty are from diverse countries of origin (including Iran and Australia), and include women and members of underrepresented minority groups. Their presence among the standing faculty will bring a set of new perspectives and contribute to the discourse about diversity and identity politics throughout the School.

During the search process, we reached out to professional, academic and alumni networks that are inclusive of underrepresented minorities (URMs), including the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) and Women in Architecture. We also posted position descriptions in various faculty search resources recommended by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty. In the coming year, we plan to follow a similar process while also conducting more targeted outreach to qualified minority candidates for two open faculty positions.

This year we also recruited an African American postdoctoral student through the Provost's Postdoctoral Diversity Program. Her research focuses on race, urban redevelopment, and housing policy, and she will teach a course on race and inequality in the spring semester. In the coming year, we would like to attract an additional postdoctoral student so that we can continue identifying and preparing the best prospective minority faculty candidates. We are hopeful that these postdocs and faculty will help us to better connect the design professions to the aspirations and needs of minority communities.

PennDesign continues to value the important role played by our Diversity Search Advisors (DSAs). This past year the School's two DSAs participated in five faculty searches. During search committee meetings, the DSA, along with the Dean, encouraged the committees to increase the number of minorities and women included in the pool of candidates under consideration and stressed the importance of considering the overall gender and minority balance when making an appointment. The DSA also prompted faculty to explore how their unconscious bias may be affecting their decision making about potential candidates. When asked to reflect on his role as DSA over the past year, Dana Tomlin, Professor in Landscape Architecture and long-time PennDesign DSA/Affirmative Action Officer, noted, "I have been impressed by the degree to which committee members seem not only to have understood the essential message (that *Equal Opportunity* must be respected in making final decisions), but also to have embraced and even been empowered by it." He added that the efforts of the DSAs to encourage search committees to identify a diverse applicant pool are "not nearly as effective as surgical strikes by individual members of the faculty who are able and willing to try to identify particular recruitment targets and work with them one-on-one."

### **III. Increased Outreach to Underrepresented Minority Students**

This year we continued to work with our Faculty Ambassador for Minority Recruitment, Studio Instructor Shawn Rickenbacker, to help increase the number of underrepresented minority (URM) applicants to PennDesign. Professor Rickenbacker worked closely with colleagues at colleges and universities across the US – including several Historically Black Colleges and Universities – to identify promising minority applicants, many of whom he contacted directly. He also accompanied the Director of Admissions and a select group of current PennDesign students to Morgan State University, one of PennDesign's most important feeder schools. In addition, we partnered with the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) to include an announcement in their bi-weekly newsletter about PennDesign's various programs and scholarship opportunities.

Last fall the Director of Admissions attended several recruitment events focusing specifically on attracting more minority applicants, including the NOMA Graduate School Fair, the California Diversity Forum Grad School Fair, and the Atlanta University Center Consortium (includes Spelman, Morehouse, and Clark Atlanta). The PennDesign Admissions Office sent personal e-mails to prospective minority applicants whose names we received from the GRE Search Service and e-mails to select individuals on our mailing list inviting them to our annual fall Open House. We also distributed 11 out of 12 full-tuition diversity scholarships. This represents a financial commitment of \$1.38 million or 23% of our total master's aid budget.

The school's efforts to recruit a more diverse student body were bolstered by this year's *Demystifying the Design Professions* event, the opening of the School's fall-semester Open House for prospective students. The event is coordinated by *DiverseDesign*, a student-led group that is dedicated to fostering a PennDesign community that celebrates and promotes diversity. *DiverseDesign*'s mission is 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 *Demystifying the Design Professions* is to discuss the importance of diverse

perspectives and disciplines in the design professions and at PennDesign. This year's program focused on PennDesign's commitment to social impact and the range of social impact projects involving our students, including design and development of a pop-up community garden in Northeast Philadelphia, a three-day expo on home maintenance and repair in West Philadelphia, development of a public art installation out of discarded construction materials in southwest Philadelphia, and work with students at Huey Elementary School near Penn's campus to design and brand plates that encourage students to eat healthy foods.

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

PennDesign continued efforts to foster a climate of inclusiveness and celebrate the diversity of our student body by increasing the diversity of our Board of Overseers and through the school's global initiatives, lecture series, social events, and facilitated discussions about diversity issues. This year, as in years past, we offered design studio courses and summer programs in countries around the world, including China, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Greece, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Spain and Sweden. Our annual lecture series featured more than 50 lecture and panel discussions facilitated by internationally recognized architects, urban planners, theorists, designers and artists from various disciplines and backgrounds, many of whom are from countries outside of the United States.

This year DiverseDesign sponsored a series of events to promote and celebrate multiculturalism at PennDesign. In February 2016, DiverseDesign hosted a Chinese New Year celebration that included a dancing dragon, activities and Chinese food. In April, the group sponsored a school-wide round table discussion called *Justice + Space II*, which focused on how urban design and space can contribute to or ameliorate racial and socioeconomic injustice. This student-run event was supported in part by a *Campaign for Community* grant from the Provost's Office. Attended by over 70 students, faculty, and guests, the all-day event included panels on cultural preservation, school closures and reuse, reclaiming abandoned space, and envisioning a more just future through a facilitated design charrette. The event was followed by *A Day of Action* at North Philly Peace Park in the Sharswood Section of North Philadelphia. A copy of the event program is attached.



DiverseDesign *Justice + Space II*, April 2, 2016

As in years past, the Dean of PennDesign hosted the annual PennDesign women faculty dinner at her home in April. This provides a social opportunity for women faculty to talk about the issues uniquely affecting them, and exemplifies PennDesign's commitment to creating a climate of inclusivity.

This year we also increased the diversity of the School's Board of Overseers with the addition of Mark Gardner, an architect and PennDesign alumna who is also African American, to the Board. We recognize that we still have a long way to go to, and we are hoping to add another 1-2 people of color to our Board of Overseers within the next year.

## **V. Future Plans**

In the coming year we will continue implementing many of the initiatives listed above, with a particular focus on increasing the School's partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, using our partnership with Morgan State as a model. We are also hoping to identify additional promising candidates for the University's Postdoctoral Fellowship for Academic Diversity and to increase the number of full diversity scholarships that the School offers to talented minority applicants by seeking funding from local and national foundations, including the Ford Foundation. Additionally, we are interested in continuing our involvement with the University's Campaign for Community Initiative. We look forward to keeping you apprised of our progress on these projects and on our ongoing efforts to promote a more inclusive community within our school.