



University of Pennsylvania School of Design
Diversity Through Excellence Plan Update
September 28, 2018

I. Introduction

PennDesign continues to mount new initiatives and implement strategies to foster a more inclusive community. We recognize that design is a global enterprise, requiring faculty, students, scholars, and practitioners to learn and share experiences with cultures, societies, clients, and communities around the world.

PennDesign is committed to creating an educational setting in which all students, faculty members, and staff members are valued. We strive to create an inclusive culture that celebrates difference and is strengthened by contributions from people of all races, religions, countries of origin, genders, ages, sexual orientations, physical abilities, learning differences, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

We aspire to support and retain a student body, faculty, and staff who are representative of the multiple communities and publics with which we collaborate and work. A diverse community at PennDesign enhances our ability to prepare the next generation of artists, architects, landscape architects, planners, and preservationists to become leaders and innovators in a multicultural society.

This *Diversity through Excellence Plan Update* highlights PennDesign's recent activities and initiatives in the past year designed to promote a more inclusive community that welcomes and celebrates difference.

II. Recruiting a More Diverse Faculty

PennDesign continues to identify strategies for recruiting a diverse pool of applicants to fill open standing faculty positions and to identify applicants with a commitment to incorporating diverse perspectives into their curriculum. This past year, we conducted three standing faculty searches in City Planning, Architecture, and in Landscape Architecture. These searches included a training for committee members on implicit bias in the search process, assertive language in the job posting regarding the value of diversity in our school, expanded outreach to promote the position, and ongoing reports to inform

search committee members of progress throughout the process. In July 2018, we welcomed four new standing faculty members to PennDesign, including two women and one Chinese man. Additionally, we've added our second recipient of the Penn *Postdoctoral Fellowship for Academic Diversity Program* in our department of City and Regional Planning.

This academic year, the school is conducting a search for a standing faculty member in the department of Landscape Architecture. As in years past, we have reached out to professional, academic, and alumni networks that are inclusive of underrepresented minorities (URMs) to promote these open positions and encourage applications. These include the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), Women in Architecture, Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education, the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, and the Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC), Diverse Jobs, and other informal networks of PennDesign alumni and faculty.

III. Increased Outreach to Underrepresented Minority Students

We continue to work to increase the number of underrepresented minority (URM) applicants to PennDesign. This fall, our Director of Admissions, a representative from the School's Board of Overseers, and current PennDesign students are coordinating visits to Morgan State University Hampton University, Howard University, Morehouse and potentially other HBCUs. In addition, PennDesign collaborated with the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) to announce PennDesign's various programs and scholarship opportunities, and we participated in the NOMA Graduate School Fair and the California *Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education*. PennDesign has also increased student recruitment activity in Latin America and offered designated fellowships for Latin American students in addition to including a breakout panel discussion on diversity at the spring and fall open house, and sent personal e-mails to prospective minority applicants whose names we received from the GRE Search Service. The School also increased its financial commitment to diversity scholarships to approximately \$1.75M or 27.4% of our total financial aid budget for masters students, the highest percentage to date.

IV. Fostering a Culture of Inclusion

The dearth of minorities in the fields of architecture, city planning, and landscape architecture, and the underrepresentation of women in these fields contributes to the challenge of increasing diversity within PennDesign. The newly formed PennDesign

Diversity Committee (launched in 2017), which includes faculty, students, and staff, is dedicated to helping the Dean identify strategies to address this steep challenge. The committee organizes diversity-oriented events, coordinates trainings and discussions on diversity-related issues, maintains and updates the diversity section of the School's website, and implements initiatives designed to promote a greater sense of community and inclusiveness at PennDesign. Managed by the school's Diversity Coordinator, the committee aims to encourage dialogue, seek input, and open lines of communication to help all members of the PennDesign community feel valued and heard. Below is a summary of some of the School's recent diversity related initiatives and events.

- Dean Steiner hosted a *Students of Color Breakfast* on Friday September 21, 2018 to welcome new and returning students to the academic year and seek their input on how to make the school more inclusive. Twenty-five students attended.
- Three new student groups launched in the past year: *Design in Latin America*, *Urban China Collective*, and the *PennDesign Social Justice Group*. These are in addition to other affinity groups, including *QueerDesign* and *Women in Architecture* groups.
- In August 2018, the school updated and expanded the *Diversity at PennDesign* section of the PennDesign website. The expansion includes professional resources, lectures and workshops, university resources, and more.
- The PennDesign Social Justice Group coordinated a school-wide talk, hosted by Professor Lisa Servon, *Civil Conversations-Sidling Up to Difference* on September 18, 2018, with the intention to create monthly student-led discussions.
- The Diversity Committee coordinated two school-wide events, *Diversity and Interdisciplinary Electives Preview* nights held on November 7, 2017 and March 27, 2018, during the advance registration periods. These events highlight elective courses whose content promotes diversity, social impact and/or interdisciplinary collaboration. Faculty and students presented information on inclusiveness, justice, and equality, through courses such as *Art & Social Work*, *Detroit's Spatial Imagination (Architectural Grassroots Networks)*, *Art & Resistance*, *Interpretation in the Future Tense*, *Philadelphia: Urban Experience and Public Memory*, *Social Impact Projects*, and more. Student groups including *QueerDesign* and *Women in Architecture* also shared information. This event was

attended by about 75 students each time, and featured faculty and student presenters, and information on over 18 student groups across campus which provide resources for those in underserved populations.

- The Diversity Committee collaborated with Student Council on the second annual *Student Diversity Town Hall* on February 23, 2018.
- The Diversity Committee funded student researchers to embark on a project to establish a more diverse pool of candidates for critic and juror positions in each of the five departments, with a focus on those departments who are most lacking in diversity.
- The school facilitated a lunchtime workshop on April 3, 2018, with Davis Knittle, PhD in English, called *Creating an Inclusive Classroom for Trans and Gender Nonconforming Students*, for PennDesign faculty, students, and staff.
- In October 2017, the Dean charged each of PennDesign's five department chairs to report on their efforts to ensure that the courses and syllabi in their respective departments include a diverse range of scholars, voices, topics, and perspectives and to increase the diversity of their courses/curriculum. Faculty were also invited to share tools and resources that have helped them to diversify their curricula and studio content.
- PennDesign coordinated a discussion with all faculty on January 17, 2018 titled *Helping All Your Students See that They Belong in Your Class and Your Field*," facilitated by the Executive Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, Bruce Lenthall. This dialogue focused on helping faculty to communicate high expectations while providing students with the support and encouragement necessary to succeed. The focus was on encouraging a greater "sense of belonging" among students in the classroom, particularly underrepresented minorities and first-generation students. PennDesign faculty who have been successful in updating their teaching and classroom discussions shared resources and ideas.
- A faculty chat regarding diversifying course content took place on April 5, 2018 for faculty members who asked for a more informal opportunity to continue discussions.

Professor Lisa Servon facilitated a casual faculty talk to share ideas & resources and identify ways to support one another in these efforts.

- In March 2018, the student group *Women in Architecture* hosted a successful design symposium on the evolving role of women in the profession with a full day of workshops empowering the future leaders in design. Workshop topics included negotiation, networking, knowing your rights, navigating construction sites, and assertive communication.

Lecture Series

PennDesign's annual 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 year's series included several lectures focusing on diversity in in the design professions.

Examples include:

- Mindy Fullilove spoke to PennDesign students regarding the ties between environment and mental health. Dedicated to the psychology of place, Fullilove's research started when she linked the AIDS epidemic with place of residence and she continues to focus on the health problems caused by inequality.
- The Department of City and Regional Planning welcomed Manuel Pastor, Professor of Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity, University of South California, for a conversation with Dean Steiner on Social and Environmental Justice
- PennPraxis hosted Sierra Bainbridge, principal at MASS Group, with a presentation regarding the practice of social impact architecture and landscape architecture for community development and health.
- In February 2018, Associate Professor of City Planning and Urban Studies Domenic Vitiello presented *Immigration Past, Present, and Future*. Professor Vitiello is a former member of AFRICOM, served on the board of ACANA and as board chair of JUNTOS, and worked with many other immigrant and refugee community organizations in Philadelphia. He is currently writing a book titled *The Sanctuary City* that examines Central American, Southeast Asian, African, Arab, and Mexican immigration to Philadelphia since the 1970s.

- In March 2018, Philadelphia-born artist Cameron Rowland spoke at the ICA regarding a multilayered genealogical investigation into slavery and its ties to economic development and mass incarceration in the United States. Rowland describes how the origins of present-day inmate labor are entangled with efforts to effectively re-enslave African-Americans.
- Edwin Melendez discussed *Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria* in March 2018. An economist by training, Melendez has conducted considerable research in the areas of Puerto Rican and Latino studies, economic development, labor markets, and poverty.
- In March 2018, Penn IUR and the PennDesign Department of City and Regional Planning celebrated the launch of "*Beyond Mobility: Planning Cities for People and Places*" by Penn IUR Faculty Fellows Erick Guerra, Assistant Professor in City and Regional Planning School of Design, Stefan Al, Associate Professor of City and Regional Planning, School of Design, and Penn IUR Scholar Robert Cevero, Professor, Department of City and Regional Planning, University of California-Berkeley. *Beyond Mobility* is about prioritizing the needs and aspirations of people and the creation of great places.
- The Ian L. McHarg Center for Urbanism and Ecology at PennDesign welcomed May Boeve, executive director of 350.org, in conversation with Councilwoman Helen Gym (City of Philadelphia), Mark Gardner (J/GA and The New School), Barbara Brown-Wilson (UVA), and Billy Fleming (McHarg) for its fall public forum: *Designing the Political Landscape: Activism, Urbanism, and Design in the Trump Era*.
- Co-sponsored by the Alice Paul Center for Research on Gender, Sexuality and Women, the Historic Preservation program presented *Learning from LGBTQ Places: Thoughts on Heritage and Preservation*. Donna Graves discussed her recent work on LGBTQ historic sites and current efforts to recognize and protect historic places and intangible heritage in the face of the economic tsunami reshaping San Francisco.
- In September 2018, Professor Mabel O. Wilson's gave a lecture titled *Memory/Race/Nation: The Politics of Modern Memorials* exploring the memorialization of Caucasian soldiers, politicians and muses at the expense of the lives and labor of black and brown bodies. Mabel O. Wilson authored *Begin with the Past: Building the National Museum of African American History and Culture* (2016) and *Negro Building: African Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (2012). She is a member of the design team for the Memorial to Enslaved African American Laborers at the University of Virginia.

V. Conclusion / Future

PennDesign is proud of the progress we have made in the past year, but we recognize that the School still faces tremendous challenges. We will continue to implement many of the initiatives listed above, with a particular focus on further expanding our recruitment efforts to potential URM students, increasing our efforts to identify promising minority faculty of the future, implementing new programs to promote a greater sense of inclusiveness within the PennDesign community, and measuring our progress.

We recognize that changing the School's culture to make sure that faculty, staff, and students from all backgrounds feel welcome, valued, and supported requires a multi-faceted approach. We have laid out a comprehensive list of concrete goals and next steps in several key domains (including *Faculty Recruitment, Student Recruitment and Support, Faculty Support and Curriculum, and Programming*) in PennDesign's 2018 Five-Year Faculty Diversity Plan (see attached). We believe that the existence of the School's Diversity Committee, with representation from each of our five departments/programs, will help ensure that these goals are among the School's top priorities and that conversations about diversity, inclusion, and social justice are taking place at both the department and the School level.