



**Stuart Weitzman School of Design
Affirmative Action Plan Update
December 4, 2019**

I. Introduction

This has been an exciting and transformative year – both for the Weitzman School as a whole, and for the school’s diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. The naming of the School in recognition of Stuart Weitzman’s lifetime support of Penn in February 2019 has allowed us to reaffirm our commitment to the School’s top priorities, including our commitment to increasing the diversity of students, faculty, and staff and promoting a more inclusive culture, in addition to allocating more resources to help us achieve these important goals.

The school’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, now in its third year, has refined its emphasis on a few critical priorities and has brought conversations about the School’s culture to the forefront. We recognize that cultural change is challenging and that many of the obstacles to progress – including lack of diverse representation in the school’s faculty and student body – can be hard to dismantle. However, we have made great strides toward prioritizing and valuing difference and diversity across the school. This *Affirmative Action Plan Update* highlights the Weitzman School’s continuing activities and recent initiatives designed to promote a more inclusive community.

II. Recruiting a More Diverse Faculty

The Weitzman School continues to identify strategies for recruiting a diverse pool of applicants to fill open standing faculty positions and identify applicants with a commitment to incorporating multiple perspectives into their curricula.

In July 2019, we welcomed a new woman to the standing faculty as an Associate Professor in Landscape Architecture. We also welcomed a full-time lecturer who was previously a Penn Provost Postdoctoral Fellow for Academic Diversity. She is currently under review to join the standing faculty in 2020.

This year, we are conducting standing faculty searches in both Architecture and Landscape Architecture. These searches included training for committee members on implicit bias in the search process, assertive language in job postings regarding the value of diversity in our school, expanded outreach to promote the position, and ongoing demographic reports to inform search committee members throughout the process.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee continues to encourage department chairs to bring in more diverse representatives and more diverse perspectives into the hiring of part-time lecturers and invited jurors.

III. Increased Outreach to Underrepresented Minority Students

Since December 2018, the Weitzman School has welcomed the largest number and percentage of incoming URM students in its history. More specifically, the number of African-American students entering the school in fall 2019 increased nearly five-fold, from three last year to 14 this year (check this). The yield rates for African Americans increased from 27% in 2018 to 47% in 2019, and the percentage of URM students across the school increased from 21% of US students to 24%. This year we also welcomed the School's first Fontaine Fellow in over five years.

These significant accomplishments are due in large part to increased funding for URM and other students made possible by the Weitzman Gift and by the Moelis Scholars Program, which supports students of color in the Master of City Planning program who are thinking about pursuing careers in housing and community and economic development with tuition remission and other benefits. Started by Ron Moelis (C'78 W'78), CEO and founding partner of L+M Development Partners, the goal of the program is to bring people from a range of backgrounds into the planning discipline and to pave the way for careers in private development for those who are interested. In addition to tuition remission, the program includes a research assistantship stipend, participation in the American Planning Association, and a mentorship component.

The increase in the number of students of color at the Weitzman School is also due to the outreach of the admissions staff to minority serving institutions and forums. In the past year, the Weitzman School attended the California Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education (which was disrupted by power outages in Northern California), and was a sponsor of the National Organization of Minority Architects' (NOMA's) Graduate School Fair. The School also had a panel as part of its fall Open House to highlight recent diversity initiatives. The panel included representatives from the Diversity Committee and from Inclusion in Design, one of the school's many affinity groups. The Director of Admissions continued to strengthen the school's multi-year partnership with Morgan State University by visiting undergraduate architecture students to promote the Weitzman School. She was accompanied by a faculty member from the Landscape Architecture Department and a Morgan State graduate and current Weitzman student. The admissions staff also sent personal e-mails to prospective minority applicants whose names we received from the GRE Search Service. This academic year, the School committed approximately \$1.6 M or 17.4% of our total financial aid budget for masters' students to diversity scholarships.

IV. Fostering a Culture of Inclusion

One of the strongest yet hardest to measure accomplishments demonstrating the effectiveness of our efforts to promote a more inclusive culture is the increased level of discourse about identity politics, diversity, and inclusion across the school. The school-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee has sparked important dialogue within the faculty about developing curricula that reflect more diverse voices, prompted the emergence of new student groups dedicated to inclusiveness, instituted regular events and initiatives to foster discussion about equity and social justice, and catalyzed school leadership to increase training and discussion of diversity for faculty, staff and students. Below is a summary of some recent initiatives:

A. Student Focused Events & Initiatives

- **Moelis Scholars Program.** As mentioned above, the Moelis Scholars Program, open to African-American and Latinx students who are thinking about pursuing careers in housing and community and economic development, was launched in fall 2019. The Program supports students of color in the Master of City Planning program with tuition remission, mentoring, and other benefits. The program includes a scholarship, research assistantship stipend, American Planning Association Membership, and mentoring.
- **Events for Students of Color.** In September 2019, the School hosted a reception for students of color, which was attended by new and current Weitzman students and faculty. The event provided an informal opportunity for students to meet each other, and for the Dean to formally welcome them.

On Nov 8, 2019, the Chair of the City and Regional Planning Department hosted an Alumni of Color Reception featuring Lisa Nutter, MCP'92, Principal of Sidecar Social Finance and Former First Lady of Philadelphia.

- **Student Affinity Groups.** The School's many student affinity groups (some of which are listed below) have continued to increase in numbers and offerings. They include:
 - *Inclusion in Design* seeks to foster an environment in which students of color, marginalized identities, and allies can thrive. (Marginalized identities include: racial, ethnic, sexual minorities, disabled students, international students etc.) They have organized lunchtime presenters, town halls, a student PechaKucha event, and are working on ways to build connection across the Weitzman design community.
 - *Design in Latin America* was created to share the vibrant and diverse, Latin American cultures with the Weitzman School community. The group's mission is to address Latin American topics to foster a reciprocal cultural exchange within the Weitzman School and with other Latin American organizations on campus and beyond to understand, appreciate and enhance Latin American diversity and address the region's pending challenges.
 - *Women in Design*, previously *Women in Architecture*, actively provides networking and mentorship opportunities to members in historically male-dominated fields such as architecture and design. The goal is to mobilize a community of designers and thinkers with the purpose of increasing the visibility and impact of women and to bring awareness to the gender disparity that exists in design professions. Students empower each other by fostering growth, promoting success, and above all, cultivating the next generation of female leaders.

- *QueerDesign* was created to build a community of LGBTQ+ designers to support a space of exchange and judgment free collaboration. Aiming to foster discussions about the meaning of diversity and its intersection with design at Penn and beyond, QueerDesign hopes to connect to existing networks of students and professionals. In addition, the organization explores a number of facets of queer culture and history, specifically within the realm of design.
 - *Urban China Collective (UCC)* serves as a platform to foster understanding of China's urban development through lectures and workshops. The group seeks to strengthen the network of scholars, practitioners, and students devoted to studying China's urbanization across disciplines and institutions.
- **Town Hall for Weitzman Students of Color.** On January 31, 2019, Inclusion in Design hosted an informal lunch discussion and town hall with members of the Weitzman School community. The goal of the town hall event was for students to have a safe, nonjudgmental forum to share feedback about how the Weitzman School could become a more inclusive community.
 - **Minority/Underrepresented Professionals in City Planning Discussion.** On April 17, 2019, the Office of Professional Development and Leadership coordinated a panel of City Planning alumni of color working in a range of different fields. The alumni spoke about their diverse career paths and how best to prepare for life after Weitzman.
 - **Dialogues across Difference Discussion with Historic Preservation Students.** In August 2019, students in the Historic Preservation Program participated in an afternoon workshop designed to better prepare them to experience neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia as guests and partners rather than clinical observers. The three-hour session provided participants with tools for examining and addressing unconscious bias. The workshop was facilitated by Carla Thomas, PhD, Senior Training and Development Consultant. Dr. Thomas' research examines implicit bias in the workplace, how people experience it, and what can mitigate it.
 - **Workshop on Product Inclusion.** On Sept 24, 2019 *Inclusion in Design* hosted Annie Jean-Baptiste, Google's head of Product Inclusion to speak about her experiences and initiatives at Google regarding how the design process can serve a more inclusive audience.
 - **Financial Inclusion: Finding Funding Domestically and Internationally.** On November 20, 2019 Inclusion in Design, the International Planning and Development Club, Weitzman Professional Development & Leadership Office, the Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships (CURF), and the Weitzman Research Support Center hosted a workshop on financial resources at Penn, including resources specifically for underrepresented students.
 - **Book launch for Women [Re]Build: Stories, Polemics, Futures,** edited by Associate Professor Franca Trubiano and Weitzman School alumnae, Ramona Adlakha (MArch'18) and Ramune Bartuskaite (MArch'18). Published by ORO Editions/AR+D, Women Re[Build] discusses

contemporary, topical, and important subjects related to gender, architectural education, and practice.

B. Faculty & Staff Focused Events

- **Presentation by Marybeth Gasman**, On April 17, 2019, Dr. Gasman, former Professor (GSE) and Director of Penn Center for Minority-Serving Institutions, presented findings from her research at a Weitzman School faculty meeting. Her presentation, titled “Educating a Diverse Nation: How to Teach and Empower Students Across Racial and Ethnic Groups,” focused on the strategies that academic institutions could be using to hire more faculty of color and her assessment of the barriers that impede The Academy’s efforts to become more diverse.
- **Diversity Training for Staff and Faculty**. In June and July 2019, the School offered a mandatory staff training/facilitated discussion called “Dialogues across Difference” over a two-day period that was facilitated by Senior Training and Development Consultant Carla Thomas (described above). The workshops focused on topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion that impact not only everyday lives, but how work is done at Penn. The goal was to create common language and practical approaches for diversity and inclusion discourse. This training/discussion was also offered to faculty in the Department of City Planning and will be rolled out for all Weitzman School faculty in fall 2020.
- **Teaching for and from Diversity: A Teaching Workshop Series for PhD students**. Throughout AY 2019-2020, Rui Morais e Castro (PhD Candidate in Architecture History and Theory and Graduate Fellow for Teaching Excellency at the Center for Teaching and Learning) is coordinating a series of workshops designed for PhD students to consider diversity topics and promote more inclusive teaching practices. These workshops are open to all Weitzman faculty and students. The first workshop was held in September 2019.

C. School-wide Events & the Weitzman School Lecture Series

The Weitzman School’s 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 people of color and individuals from countries outside of the United States. Below are a few selected lectures from the 2019 calendar year that focused on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- **Ralph Lemon, Department of Fine Arts**. On February 7, 2019, Ralph Lemon, the Keith L. and Kathy Sachs Visiting Professor in the Department of Fine Arts, spoke about his work as part of the Department’s spring 2019 lecture series. Lemon is a choreographer, writer, visual artist, and curator, as well as the Artistic Director of Cross Performance, a company dedicated to the creation of Cross – cultural and Cross – disciplinary performance and presentation. Lemon’s work is a meditation on the body, race, art making, and the Civil Rights Movement.
- **Troy Michie, Department of Fine Arts**. On February 28, 2018, the Fine Arts Department hosted Troy Machine, an interdisciplinary artist whose work employs the discourse of collage and

assemblage as a framework to resolve the complexities of marginal identity. He spoke about the governance of desire using the queer body as a site of excavation.

- **Tamika Butler Lecture: Beyond Complete Streets.** On March 18, 2019 the Department of City and Regional Planning hosted Tamika Butler, Esq., Toole Design's Director of Planning for California and the Director of Equity and Inclusion, who spoke about her efforts to help Toole become a more diverse, inclusive workplace that employs people of all backgrounds.
- **Work in Progress: Monuments and the Politics of Commemoration.** On March 26, 2019, a panel of artists, curators, historians, and preservationists discussed a variety of responses to the waves of controversy surrounding public art, historical monuments, and other memorials with new approaches to building equity and collectivity in public spaces. Panelists discussed recent projects related to the topic in several cities, including Philadelphia, New York, and Birmingham.
- **Black Urbanism YR-O1 Exhibition.** This exhibition, which was featured in the Mezzanine of Meyerson Hall from February through April 2019, included recent photographs by Matthew J. Miller, postdoctoral fellow in the Department of City and Regional Planning, and Gabriel Miller, an artist based in the Bay Area. The images were part of a preservation project/photography series that aims to map and display the range of Black diasporic life around the world—from the everyday to the spectacular.
- **Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon Series at Fisher Fine Arts Library.** In April 2019, members of the Weitzman School were invited to participate in three edit-a-thons to improve the coverage of marginalized artists and cultures and combat racial and gender bias on Wikipedia illuminating the art and artists from African American communities and the African Diaspora; Latin America; and cis and transgender women and non-binary folks respectively.
- **The Cunningham Lecture in Architecture: Jha D. Williams.** On April 17, 2019, Jha D. Williams, a Weitzman M.Arch graduate, spoken word artist, and event organizer, discussed her work creating spaces for artists, particularly those that are part of the LGTBQIA communities of color. As a designer, she urges that design and the built environment are vehicles for equity, justice and social change.
- **Lecture Series on the Synthetic: Charles Davis and Solmaz Sharif,** On November 4, 2019, poet Solmaz Sharif and architectural historian Charles Davis spoke about their work. Sharif presented a reading of poems titled "'I can't do what I want / to do with my own body': A Reading in Conversation with June Jordan" and Davis presented his new visual and scholarly work "Building Black Utopias: The Architectural Modernisms of African American Writers, 1960-1975." This lecture is part of a larger series considering the aesthetics of difference in design and funded in part through the *Provost's Excellence through Diversity Fund*. This series of interdisciplinary lectures celebrates excellence and inclusion at the Weitzman School of Design and seeks to build a community of faculty, staff, and students dedicated to questions of inclusivity and equity.
- **Change Over time Dialogues: LGBTQ Heritage.** A panel discussion on November 5, 2019 explored the theoretical and practical dimensions of preserving the sites and places of a historically

invisible and transient history. The discussion was moderated by Ken Lustbader, Co-Director of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project and presented by the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation and the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Center.

- **Women [Re]Build: Stories, Polemics, and Futures.** On November 11, 2019 the Department of Architecture hosted a book launch for *Women [Re]Build: Stories, Polemics, Futures*, edited by Associate Professor Franca Trubiano and Weitzman School alumnae Ramona Adlakha (MArch'18) and Ramune Bartuskait (MArch'18).
- **Interventions in Informal settlements in Latin American Countries.** On November 13, 2019 the student group *Design in Latin America* hosted this talk by Pablo Meninato from Temple University.

V. Conclusion & Future Directions

As we celebrate the largest incoming class of underrepresented minority students to date, implement the first year of the Moelis Scholars Program, and prepare to welcome our first African-American woman to the standing faculty, we recognize the importance of building on the School's progress and maintaining our momentum. We will continue efforts to recruit more faculty members of color and strengthen the School's focus on questions of critical race and gender in curriculum, lectures, and facilitated discussions. We are equally committed to increasing the number of URM students across the School, particularly in departments and fields with fewer students of color.

It is also important to note that approximately 60% of the students at the Weitzman School of Design are international. The School's efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion must also take into account the varied needs of the international student community, including ensuring that the faculty and staff are reflective of who is in the classroom.

One strategy that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee has identified to assist the School in meeting these objectives is the active engagement of Weitzman alumni, particularly international alumni and alumni of color. Creating an active network for support and communication across all five of the School's departments over multiple years can play a vital role in shaping the School's culture. Alumni ambassadors can also assist with the recruitment process, often by reaching out to prospective students at their alma maters.

While we recognize the important role that alumni can play in mentoring and recruiting, we are also committed to identifying the resources necessary to strengthen these efforts in other ways, including continuing to support student affinity groups, integrating more events focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion into the School's new student orientation and throughout the year, creating new opportunities for students of color, and visiting/partnering with minority serving institutions. At the same time, we must find new ways to address the challenge of engaging faculty members who have not recognized the need to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their syllabi or in the classroom. We look forward to keeping you apprised of our progress.