

**Weitzman School of Design  
Excellence Through Diversity Plan – 2020-2021  
October 27, 2021**

**A Transformative Year**

In 2020, the unrelenting violence against Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) across the U.S.—including the murder of George Floyd and other African Americans by police officers—prompted a redoubling of the School’s commitment to eradicating bias and racism in our community. The School also strengthened efforts to recruit BIPOC students and ensure that each and every member of the Weitzman community finds the School welcoming, supportive, and intellectually transformative.

In the past year, we have taken ambitious steps toward becoming more culturally welcoming (by educating students, faculty, and staff about harmful biases that exist within our community, and promoting the School’s diversity), socially accountable (by addressing structural barriers to justice and equity within the school and recruiting more BIPOC students), and intellectually transformative (by reviewing and restructuring our curriculum, increasing programming focused on equity and inclusivity, and hiring more diverse faculty and staff). These actions focused on five primary areas:

**1. Recruitment of Faculty, Staff, and Students**

In the past year, the School’s assertive outreach efforts contributed to an increase in the number and percentage of BIPOC faculty and students joining the Weitzman School community.

- From 2019 to 2020, the percentage of faculty from racial/ethnic minoritized groups increased from 17.1% to 18.6%, and the percentage of standing faculty from underrepresented minority groups increased from 7.3% to 9.3%.
- In November 2020, women were 41.9% of the standing faculty in Weitzman, up from 36.6% in November 2019.
- Weitzman has been determined in its efforts to recruit and hire outstanding new faculty members from underrepresented groups. In July 2021, the School hired an additional African American standing faculty member, and has recruited three more African American standing faculty members, two of whom will begin in January 2022 and the third will begin in July 2022. This will increase the percentage of standing faculty from underrepresented groups to 15.2% in FY 23. The number of associated faculty and lecturers who identify as BIPOC also increased in fall 2021 from 6.3% to 11.11%.
- The reliance on virtual recruitment activities because of the pandemic allowed the Weitzman Admissions Office to increase the number of recruitment events focused on BIPOC and underrepresented minority (URM) students. Last fall (fall 2020), the Admissions Office conducted visits to 10 Minority Serving Institutions (MSI’s) and three college fairs focused on diversity recruitment compared to 5 visits to MSI’s in fall 2019.

- The percentage of BIPOC students in the AY 2021-2022 Academic Year increased from 36% in AY 21 to 38% in AY 22. The percentage of students who self-identified as URM increased from 24% in fall AY 21 to 25% in AY 22.
- In spring 2021 Weitzman established the *BIPOC Alumni Career Conversation Series (BACCS)* to support current students as well as alumni. BACCS held two workshops titled “Addressing DEI Issues in the Workplace and the Job Search Process” and “Seeking Inclusiveness and Belonging Amid Feelings of Otherness” with plans to host additional workshops this fall.
- Weitzman joined a consortium of nearly two dozen other design schools in the *Deans Equity and Inclusion Initiative*. This undertaking is devoted to nurturing a diverse population of emerging scholars by providing mentorship to BIPOC assistant professors and post-docs and includes the major design schools in the U.S. A Weitzman Black post-doc participated in the first mentoring workshop this past summer.

## **2. Creating a More Inclusive Community – Training and Programming**

The Weitzman School continued efforts to create an inclusive environment that embraces difference and welcomes diverse perspectives through trainings, a diverse lecture series, events, and socially engaged special initiatives. Below are some examples.

- The School conducted a multi-part series of anti-racism and diversity and inclusion training for faculty, staff, and students. Weitzman also partnered with the Center for Teaching and Learning to provide faculty with resources to encourage more inclusive teaching practices.
- The School’s annual lecture series featured nearly 40 diverse speakers, many of whom focused on topics related to diversity and social equity. Examples from spring and fall 2021 include: Lesbian Landscapes in Fin-de-Siècle Italy; Black/Queer/Risk and the Museum Reading Group; Seams: Crafting an Architecture (The Path of a Black Architect); The Design Legacy of Julian Abele; Gender, Environment, and Crisis; Portrait of Our Land: African American Farms and Gardens with Syd Carpenter; Queering Latinx: Imagining Inclusive Urban Spaces; Decolonizing the City-Making Professions: Learning from the Dreams and Defeats of the 1960s; and a Conversation with Aida Davis, Founder of Decolonize Design, as part of Penn Racial Justice Week, sponsored by Penn Law.
- As in years past, the School implemented several events for various affinity groups (including students of color, LGBTQ students, and the student group *Inclusion in Design*)
- In the past year, Weitzman has been an active participant in the *Justice Alliance for Design Education in Philadelphia (JADE-PHL)*, a consortium of greater Philadelphia architecture schools (Penn, Drexel, Jefferson, Temple, the Community College of Philadelphia, and Penn State which has a studio in the city), the local American Institute of Architects chapter, and local design firms, convened by the Philadelphia Center for Architecture and Design. This

group meets bi-weekly and is working to advocate and develop new initiatives to attract and retain more students of color to the architecture field, advocate for the needs of underrepresented individuals in the profession and provide new educational opportunities to consider the impact of design work on communities of color. In September 2021, Weitzman students and faculty participated in a four-day Social Justice in the Built Environment Learn-In hosted by JADE-PHL and Dark Matter University.

- In the 2021-2022, Weitzman will pilot the *Studio+ Initiative* to better prepare students to engage with diverse communities. Spearheaded by PennPraxis, Studio+ is intended to be a permanent elective studio run by faculty from across all departments focused on underserved communities. It is intended to be a multi-year commitment to one place in order to facilitate more directed community engagement and skills building.

### **3. Knowledge Production/Preparing Students/Advancing the Professions**

Weitzman recognizes the role that the design, planning, fine arts, and preservation professions have played in advancing asymmetries of power and inequity, and perpetuating spatial segregation, resource extraction, and cultural erasure. Accordingly, we are committed to contributing new knowledge to the professions we serve and re-examining and revising the School's various curricula to address this history of injustice.

- In October 2020, the Weitzman School of Design launched the *Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites (CPCRS)* to advance the understanding and sustainable conservation of heritage sites relating to African American struggles for equality, from before the passage of the 14th Amendment to the present day. CPCRS is hosting a virtual symposium on November 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> called, "Preserving and Sustaining Civil Rights Sites." The symposium will focus on advancing the urgency of preserving stories, sites, and organizations representing the heritage of civil rights in the U.S.
- The Center for Architectural Conservation at Weitzman, which is directed by Frank Matero, professor and chair in the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, received a \$1.3 million grant from the Getty Foundation to develop a conservation and management plan and professional training program for Wupatki National Monument in Arizona, which was once home to the ancestors of the Hopi, Zuni, Navajo, Yavapai, Havasupai, Hualapai, and several bands of Apache and Paiute people.
- In partnership with Monument Lab, the Center for Public Art and Place continues to work on increasing the representation of underrepresented groups in public monuments.
- In September 2020, Dean Fritz Steiner charged each of the School's five departments with conducting a comprehensive curriculum review and restructuring process to ensure a more diverse representation of voices and perspectives in courses and syllabi, including the voices of BIPOC and other marginalized groups, and to focus more intentionally on equity and social impact.

- The School’s five research centers were also charged with developing center-specific diversity, equity, and inclusion plans focused on increasing the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of visitors, speakers, lecturers, researchers, and student participants; developing more inclusive research agendas that focus on equity and social justice; and evaluating whether specific communities might be adversely impacted by or omitted from their research efforts.
- In the past year, each department increased the diversity of studio critics, jurors, and other academic participants in the School in response to a mandate from the Dean.

#### **4. Financial Support**

In our efforts to create a more just and equitable community, Weitzman recognizes the need to address the current challenges facing financially strained students and implement new initiatives and policies to help prevent economic exclusion.

- In the past year, the School established the first-ever *Student Emergency Fund* to help students with financial need or who encounter unanticipated financial emergencies.
- In addition to offering Dean’s Diversity fellowships for students whose backgrounds and experiences demonstrate the ability to contribute to increasing socioeconomic and multicultural diversity awareness at Weitzman, the School recently launched the *Moelis Scholars Program*, which supports students in the Master of City Planning program with a commitment to diversity who are interested in housing and community and economic development.
- This year, the School also established the *Julian Abele Fellowship in Architecture*, which will be given annually to a graduate architecture student or students once the fund is fully endowed. The Fellowship is named for the first Black architect to graduate from Penn in 1902.
- In Fiscal Year 2021, Weitzman spent nearly \$1.7M on diversity scholarships for students. This represents a 4% increase over Fiscal Year 2020.
- Professors and studio lecturers were encouraged to consider the financial status of their students in the development of their syllabi to create a more level playing field, particularly related to student projects.

#### **5. Infrastructure, Transparency, and Reporting**

Weitzman recognizes that our efforts to become a more equitable, just, and anti-racist community are ongoing, and that open lines of communication and trust among students, faculty, and staff, are critical. We are not just committed to taking action – but to regularly monitoring and documenting our progress across our operations. Below are examples of some of the steps the School has taken to strengthen our DEI infrastructure, become more transparent, and track the outcomes associated with our recent initiatives.

- In May 2021, Dean Steiner appointed the School's first *Director of Justice and Belonging Initiatives (JxB)* to work with faculty, staff, and students to help make Weitzman more welcoming, socially accountable, and intellectually transformative. The first JxB Director, Matt Miller, PhD, is a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of City and Regional Planning. Dr. Miller's appointment represents an important step forward in our efforts to create a culture at Weitzman in which all students, faculty members, and staff members are valued and to help us monitor the School's progress towards becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.
- The School also developed a detailed workplan with clear performance measures to monitor and document our progress toward achieving the specific DEI goals that we established at the beginning of the year. We are in the process of creating a dashboard to graphically display the School's progress and ensure greater accountability.

### **Conclusion: Working Towards Justice and Belongingness at Weitzman**

Weitzman has a longstanding commitment to cultivating an environment that celebrates and promotes diversity, champions social equity, and is inclusive of all members of our community. We seek to prepare students to become design practitioners and scholars in a global society, which requires that we provide 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.

More recently we have shifted our focus to promoting a greater sense of *justice* by planning to make structural changes to ensure that everyone in our community has access to equal opportunities and that everyone in our community feels like they *belong*. While *diversity* is about representation (are there enough people from different backgrounds here?), *inclusion* is about action (what can we do to make people with different identities feel welcome?), and *equity* is about giving everyone access to the same opportunities (recognizing that some members of our community experience unfair advantages or barriers), creating a sense of *belonging* means that *everyone* in our community feels valued and is not afraid to ask questions or raises issues. Creating a Weitzman community based on the principle of *justice* means that we don't just recognize inequities, we take steps and develop processes to address them. We look forward to working together in the coming year to lay the foundation for this more expansive vision and to increasing our commitment to making real and lasting change.

### **Attachments:**

- Weitzman's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action
- Weitzman Departmental DEI Plans
- Weitzman Research Centers' DEI Plans

# **A Message from Dean Steiner: Our Commitment to Anti-Racism Work and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action**

**August 3, 2020**

The University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design unequivocally condemns the police brutality and anti-Black violence that led to the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and dozens of other Black, Indigenous and People of Color before them.

We recognize that these tragic events are just the latest, most high-profile incidents in our nation's long history of institutionalized racism. We also recognize our profound obligation as a school to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Weitzman community and the professions we help sustain. We acknowledge the direct link between anti-Black racism and violence, and affirm our commitment to promoting design justice as part of our institutional mission to advance the public good. We call on all of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni – particularly those with privilege – to reflect on our own contributions to perpetuating racial inequality and how we can actively support the Black community as well as the other minority communities who make up our School.

There is much work to be done in addressing structural inequality and routing out racism and, as an institution, we have an obligation to take concrete steps towards that goal. Responding to centuries of injustice is not an intellectual exercise. If we are to make progress, we must commit ourselves, individually and collectively, to eliminate the harmful biases within our community. The Weitzman School is committed to taking action and to regularly monitoring and documenting our progress across our operations in the following five areas.

## **Recruitment of Faculty, Staff, and Students**

- Recruit, retain, and support more Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) faculty and staff members, including tenure track faculty and faculty and staff in leadership positions.
- Recruit, retain, and support more BIPOC students.
- Implement initiatives to increase the pipeline of BIPOC students pursuing the art, design, planning, and preservation professions.

## **Creating a More Inclusive Community – Training and Programming**

- Conduct anti-racism and diversity and inclusion training for faculty, staff, and students on an ongoing basis.
- Provide training to all students in how to engage with BIPOC sites and communities in a respectful, meaningful way, as part of design studios, research or consulting projects – adopting the mindset and practice of partner and collaborator, rather than visitor.
- Implement programming to make the Weitzman community more inclusive and to ensure that all students, faculty, and staff members are valued and feel heard.

## **Knowledge Production/Preparing Students/Advancing the Professions**

- Review and restructure the curricula in each of the School's departments to ensure a diverse representation of voices and perspectives, including BIPOC voices.
- Increase the diversity of studio critics, jurors, and other academic participants in the School.
- Ensure that the School's research agenda includes work by, and for, BIPOC and other marginalized communities.
- Increase public awareness of how the architecture, fine art, landscape architecture, planning, and preservation professions have contributed to racial injustice and formulate a framework for promoting racial equity.

## **Financial Support**

- Establish an emergency fund to help students with financial need or who encounter unanticipated financial emergencies, and increase transparency related to out-of-pocket costs.
- Continue to raise funds to support student fellowships and help decrease student debt.

## **Infrastructure, Transparency, and Reporting**

- Ensure that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work is more prominent in and more fully integrated into the School and each department/program, and review relevant data and accountability measures regularly to monitor the School's progress.
- Increase transparency related to selection criteria for awards and student employment.

We intend for this list to evolve as we grow in our work. We invite feedback, and we commit to reporting on our efforts and progress at least annually. Each of us has a role, and we pledge our commitment to continuous work to be antiracist in our thinking and in our doing.