

## Annual Report: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee 2020-2021

### Members:

Michael Brown (Fall & Winter Quarter)

Parwati Martin

Aja Sutton

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**Fall Quarter:** With the Colloquium Committee We co-sponsored an intra-department roundtable and workshop on teaching during the 2020 Presidential Election season. Faculty, staff, and graduate students discussed and debated strategies for handling questions of race and justice emerging in the classroom during the season.

The Office of Equity and Justice in the Graduate School held three workshops, which we and the GPC attended: Holistic Admissions (10/29), Supporting BIPOC Students (11/18), and Affinity Groups (12/16). Resources can be found here: <https://www.grad.washington.edu/equity-inclusion-and-diversity/programs-resources/eid-resources-toolkits/>

Winter Quarter: We invited those teaching in the department to use the Geography Department's Teaching and Learning Equity Assessment tool to appraise (and revise) their course content to enhance racial equity. Everyone who provided feedback on the process expressed how helpful it was in providing an explicit, systematic means to addressing and correcting DEI issues in their teaching. Here are some excerpts from the feedback:

- The framework prompted me to revise my usual syllabus blurb on diversity/equity – the old version was a bit more focused on prompting people to be nice to one another (also important but...), and needed to be more specific in naming structural exclusions like race, gender, ability, and emphasize equity over inclusion.
- Creating community norms is part of my usual practice for setting up seminars - the assessment prompted me to think about the how those might be meaningful revisited throughout the quarter.
- The [assessment tool] prompted me to notice that I don't point up what they can expect of me - so future version of my syllabus will include text on how I determine final grades, what kind of feedback students can expect from me, what kinds of engagements and outputs tend to result in what kinds of scores on the 4.0 scale in my grad seminars. I think this is best handled in narrative form, and I will build it out for next year – this is most crucial for incoming students who are both new to 4.0 system AND grad seminar grading.
- Overall, the assessment prompted me to realize that as a general rule, my grad syllabi are far less attentive to access and equity questions than my undergrad syllabus, especially in terms of demystifying academic work at graduate level. This definitely needs attention in future iterations. We know that grad education often seems to have a 'hidden curriculum' - things that students are assumed to know or supposed to figure out without us telling them. So I want to think more about how my grad seminar syllabi, and our seminar sessions can help me these

hidden things explicit (e.g. when authors visit, ask them to talk about their publication, review and revision process; ask visiting academics to talk about their trajectories).

- I spent a great deal more time this year explicitly ending lectures and discussion with discussions of why we were doing the things we did (readings, points of discussion, etc.). The seminar became much, much more student-centered.
- Taking the section on care and racial equity to heart, I deliberately reached out the students who required extra help or flexibility at multiple times during the quarter. This allowed me to appreciate the different struggles and penury some students are coping with.
- I redesigned my assignments to be more flexible and student-driven. I learned a lot from how and where students took them.
- I had to completely restructured my class this past quarter. I used the Equity-Assessment Tool as a guide to further racial diversity in the readings --in terms of both authors as well as places and their case studies across the globe. While there was some complaints about objectivity, the overall response from the students was positive.

Four workshops were held by the Office of Equity and Justice in the Graduate School, which we and the GPC attended: Cross-Racial Mentoring (1/13), Implicit Bias in Graduate Admissions (2/3), BIPOC Graduate Student Mental Health (3/8), and Equity Graduate-Education Audit (3/10) Resources can be found here: <https://www.grad.washington.edu/equity-inclusion-and-diversity/programs-resources/for-faculty-and-staff/>

This quarter the Office of Equity and Justice called for a graduate-student liaison from the Geography Department. Natalie Vaughn-Wynn agreed to serve in this role.

### **Spring Quarter:**

The Office of Equity and Justice held a two-day summit on Equity in Graduate Education (4/14-4/15). It also held a final workshop for the year titled "Towards Effective Mentorship Practices"

We hosted an intra-department workshop on "Community Building and Belonging in the Geography Department". The event was hosted by Dr. Anu Taranath. Before the event Dr. Taranath surveyed the department members anonymously on the following topics: what conversations are not happening, hesitations about the workshop, what information we would like to get from the event, and what imbalances exist in the department. She shared some of the responses anonymously and people contributed by reiterating or elaborating on them. There was broad agreement on several themes for future work in the department. People wanted greater transparency around policies and decisionmaking in the department. Graduate students pressed senior white faculty to address their privileges, especially around service and care work and community in the department. Widespread support for increasing the number of BIPOC faculty and graduate students in the department. People discussed the difficulty in having these conversations not merely because of structural power inequities, but also doing them remotely via Zoom due to the Covid pandemic.