**The Diversity and Inclusion Committee: Year End report, 2016-17**
**Committee:** Mark Ellis, Katharyne Mitchell, Skye Naslund and Yolanda Valencia

"If you don't have a plan for inclusivity your plan is to be exclusive." -Catrice M. Jackson

"It's about religious acceptance, it's no longer about religious tolerance." -Abhijit Naskar

"Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also more hard to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden: it is easier to say 'my tooth is aching' than to say 'my heart is broken.' -C. S. Lewis

## 2016-17 Overview:

This year the diversity committee elected separate themes for each quarter. In the fall, the committee focused on classroom inclusivity, in the winter on religious diversity, and in the spring on mental health. During Fall Term the committee conducted a survey of faculty, staff, recent PhDs, graduate students, MGIS students, and undergraduate students asking about their priorities for the committee and their assessment of diversity and inclusion in the department. Also in the fall, the committee organized, in collaboration with the Professional Development Committee, a practical panel discussion on how to foster inclusivity within the department and our classrooms. José Riera-Cézanne visited campus in Winter Term and gave a series of talks on refugees and sanctuary spaces. He came to Geography to talk specifically about religious thought and religious diversity in the academy. Linda Peake, Chair of the Association of American Geographer's task force on mental health visited in Spring Term to talk about that task force's activities with a specific focus on graduate students

## Events:

**Fall Quarter:**
Panel Event developed in collaboration with the Professional Development Committee
    Panelists:
        Eric Buley, Q Center
        Mariam Mead Yaqub, Residential Life
        Dr. Charisse Williams, Counseling Center
        Joanne Woiak, Disability Studies
        Tikka Sears, Center for Teaching and Learning
*Title:* Fostering Inclusive Classrooms: Age, Race, Disability and Axes of Difference
*Date:* Friday, November 18th, 3:30-5:00pm in HUB Room 334.

*Agenda:*
This workshop was designed to provoke a departmental conversation around how to foster inclusivity within the department. Structured with 5-minue introductions to particular axes of difference by each of our panelists, this workshop focused on providing participants with concrete, practical tools for fostering inclusivity in geography classrooms and around the department. This workshop asked participants to consider how we might implement the ideals and values of the department into our teaching and provided all attendees with a packet of information about on-campus resources for students so that we might better direct students to those resources that can most help them.

**Winter Quarter:**
José Riera-Cézanne, Former UNHCR Senior Policy Adviser, Consultant based in San José, Costa Rica
*Title:* The Politics of Faith and Secularism: Contemplating Religious Diversity and Academia
*Date:* Monday, February 27th, noon-1:30pm in Smith 409.

*Agenda:*
José Riera-Cézanne served with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for more than 31 years, working in areas such as international protection/refugee law, policy development and evaluation, major UNHCR publications, external relations, and multilateral consultations and negotiations relating to refugees. His most recent assignment was Senior Policy Adviser to Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Volker Türk, the third-ranking UNHCR official. In this capacity, he organized an annual "Dialogue on Protection Challenges" for then-UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, which drew attention to emerging legal and policy issues relating to refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless people, and contributed to fostering appropriate responses. For a number of years, he also served as policy lead for a range of thematic portfolios including international migration; climate change and its ramifications for migration, displacement, and planned relocation; and UNHCR's cooperation with faith-based actors. After retiring from the United Nations in 2016, Riera-Cézanne is an international consultant based in San José, Costa Rica.  In this talk, Riera-Cézanne will discuss the role of religious diversity in academic life and research practice and the interface of that diversity with secularism.

**Spring Quarter:**
Linda Peake, Urban Studies Program and Graduate Program in Geography, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
**Title:** The new 'normal': states of mental being, graduate students and the North American academy.
**Date:** Friday, March 31, 3:30-5:00pm, Smith 304

*Agenda:*
How do graduate students in the North American academy begin to balance the existential ledger: that while recognizing their 'privilege' in being in the academy they can also feel awful about themselves? With increasing visibility of the numbers of graduate students in the academy experiencing mental and emotional distress comes the recognition that the ground upon which being 'normal' is defined is shifting beneath our feet. Caught twixt the intensity of the present and the unpredictability of an imperfect future, graduate students' positioning within the academy is characterized by an increasing precarity and its insidious potential for anxiety producing states. In this presentation I put anxiety, the affective lived experience of precarity, and other states of mental being onto the agenda of geographers in order to address the conditions under which we produce knowledge, how we create value, and the new normal's implications not only for our workplaces but also for our professional institutions.

**Departmental Diversity and Inclusivity Survey:**

In fall of 2016, the UW Geography Department's Diversity and Inclusivity Committee circulated a survey to everyone in the department (faculty, staff, recent PhDs, graduate students, MGIS students and undergrads).  The survey elicited quantitative and qualitative evaluations and feedback to better understand the state of diversity and inclusivity in the department in order to best assess what our priorities as a committee should be.  Thirty-one individuals responded to the survey including four faculty members, a staff member, a recent PhD graduate, thirteen graduate students, seven MGIS students and five undergraduates.

**What is the state of diversity and inclusivity in the department currently?**

There is clearly significant work to be done in order to improve both the diversity and inclusivity of the department.  All respondents were asked to rate both the community and the diversity in the department.  Responses are tabulated in Appendix A with the language of the question listed underneath.  Faculty responses reflect a significantly lower view of the level of diversity and inclusivity in the department than did any other group.  MGIS students, on the whole, seemed very satisfied with the level of diversity and

inclusivity in the department.  The inclusivity of the department community was generally ranked slightly higher or comparable to the level of diversity, showing that work needs to be done on both accounts.

When respondents were asked what community means for them in the context of our department, the key themes that emerged repeatedly were:  inclusion, respect, intellectual engagement, collegiality, and the importance of emotional support.  As one respondent pointed out, "[a]cademia is an emotionally and psychologically taxing environment to be immersed in, but these challenges are usually considered to be subordinate to the intellectual dimensions of academic work, when they are acknowledged at all.  Departmental community means finding ways to support each other holistically and make life in academia less isolating."  Many echoed this idea suggesting that as a department, we should be "cheering others on in their endeavors," getting to know people "beyond [their] academic sel[ves]," personally investing "in one another's wellbeing," and ultimately working "together towards the benefit of the whole department."  Finally, a couple respondents also pointed to larger missions of community engagement that require us to "act to change institutional structures of exclusion."

When respondents were asked what diversity means in the context of the department, many pointed to the common axes discussed in conversations about diversity: namely race, gender, sexuality, national origin, class, age, ability, citizenship status, etc. and the intersectional nature of individuals' identities.  Additionally, a few people stressed the importance of "addressing elitist practices" and recognizing a diversity of research approaches, methodologies, political viewpoints, and intellectual difference.  Multiple respondents pointed to the importance of thinking about diversity as something that we do, not just a numbers game.

Between both questions, many pointed to the link between climate and diversity suggesting the need to focus on "making our department open, welcoming and equitable for all members."

**How should we foster a diverse and inclusive community in the department?**

When asked about the obstacles to diversity and inclusivity in the department, collectively the three biggest concerns were who else participates in the department, class availability and the existing level of diversity in the department (Appendix B).  Faculty were particularly concerned with the existing level of diversity and their interpersonal relationships with peers.  Graduate Students were particularly concerned with the number of events, who participates, the existing level of diversity, and their interpersonal relationships with non-peers.  Both MGIS and undergraduate students were particularly concerned with class availability.  In the comments a few other concerns were expressed.  While a multiple people suggested that the biggest challenge is that the same people show up/don't show up to everything, one respondent suggested that the problem cannot be solved with participation and instead can only be addressed through our facing our privilege.

One refrain that appears more than any other in the responses can be summed up by one person's comments:  "To me the most disappointing part about our department is the lack of involvement.  When I go to a departmental event and I can count the number of faculty and staff on one hand, and graduate students on two hands, it makes me feel like I am wasting my time here.  If others don't value the community, why should I be a part of it?"

Respondents had a wide range of suggestions that predominantly stressed the importance of informal departmental spaces for both interpersonal community development and intellectual community development.  One respondent framed building a strong intellectual community as the first step to promoting an inclusive community.  The importance of everyone investing in each other's success was also stressed (faculty investing in grad and undergrad success, grads investing in faculty and undergraduate success, etc.).  Finally, some responses suggest that events that focus too narrowly on "neoliberal framing of diversity as 'add and stir' rather than a deeper engagement with how we might unintentionally exclude others" actually do more harm than good.

When asked what factors influence their own participation in departmental events, every single group ranked food as the least important motivator (Appendix C). Collectively, the timing of the event and the event topic are the two most important factors affecting participation in departmental events.

**Suggestions Moving Forward:**

Below is a list of practical suggestions that came up during the survey. Some are more practical than others and some are somewhat contradictory.

- Meet every Friday—having a regular departmental event fosters community and participation
- More events that included undergraduates with grads, faculty and staff
- Be sure the committee is really doing what we say we are (in the mission statement, Go-Map application, etc.)
- Having social events (without an agenda) can be good for fostering community and inclusivity (like the welcome reception and holiday party)
- Integrate diversity into everything, not just diversity specific events
- Stop focusing on diversity or "our differences and separating us"
- More non-hierarchical events (possibly with an outside facilitator)
- Have events that can be attended remotely so that MGIS students can participate
- More attention to fostering the undergraduate community (and including the undergraduates in the broader departmental community)
- Have a departmental Facebook group
- Have events that don't include/aren't centered around alcohol/aren't hosted at bars
- Institute a class fair where instructors/faculty preview the courses they will be offering the following quarter around the time of registration
- Create space for sharing resources between students and faculty (not just among students)
- Bring in folks from around Seattle to do trainings (ex. People's Institute, NWNetwork)
- Have a departmental retreat
- Focus more explicitly on the specifics of our department, not on diversity more generally
- Institute "informal check ins—maybe diversity brown bags"

**Appendices:**

*Appendix A:* Survey Respondents

|  | Number of Respondents | Community Rating* | Diversity Rating# |
|---|---|---|---|
| Faculty | 4 | 4.25 | 3 |
| Staff | 1 | 8 | 7 |
| Recent PhDs | 1 | 7 | 6 |
| Grad Students | 13 | 6.92 | 6.08 |
| MGIS Students | 7 | 9.29 | 9.33 |
| Undergrads | 5 | 5.8 | 6.2 |

*On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being amazing and 1 being terrible), how would you rate the community in our department?

#On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being amazing and 1 being terrible), how would you rate diversity in our department?

*Appendix B:* When thinking about fostering a diverse and inclusive community in our department, what do you think are the biggest obstacles?

|  | Class Off.* | Class Aval.# | Teaching Styles^ | Lack of Events ** | Timing of Events ## | Commu-nication ^^ | Who Part.@ | Physical Space*^ | Level of Diversity *# | Rel. with Peers*@ | Rel. with Non-Peers^# |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Faculty | 2.5 | 4 | 4 | 2.75 | 2.5 | 2.67 | 3.75 | 2.63 | 4.25 | 4.25 | 3.75 |
| Staff | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 3.5 | 3 |
| Recent PhDs | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Grad Students | 2.77 | 3.08 | 3.17 | 3.62 | 3.31 | 3.31 | 3.77 | 3.15 | 3.92 | 3 | 3.55 |
| MGIS Students | 2.83 | 3 | 2.33 | 2.67 | 2.67 | 2.5 | 2.67 | 2.42 | 2.5 | 1.83 | 2.17 |
| Under-grads | 3.8 | 4.2 | 3.4 | 2.8 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 |

*Class Offerings (What classes exist in the system)

#Class Availability (What classes are actually offered)

^Teaching Styles (of professors, instructors, TAs in the department)

**Lack of diversity related events in the department

##Timing of diversity related events in the department

^^Communication about events in the department (amount of communication/reminders/lead time)

@Who participates in departmental events (other people in my position don't go, other people in other positions don't go)

*^Physical space of the department (Smith hall, department rooms, etc.)

*#Level of diversity already present in the department

*@Interpersonal relationships amongst peers

^#Interpersonal relationships with non-peers

*Appendix C:* In terms of your participation in departmental events, rank of the following items from most important to least important to you: 1 been most important and 5 least important.

|  | Timing | Location | Topic | Food | Facilitator |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Faculty | 1.75 | 3.25 | 1 | 4.5 | 2.25 |
| Staff | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Recent PhDs | 2 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| Grad Students | 1.22 | 3.56 | 1.44 | 3.89 | 2.89 |
| MGIS Students | 3 | 2 | 1.83 | 4.17 | 2.83 |
| Undergrads | 2 | 2.8 | 1.8 | 3.6 | 3.4 |

## Additional Readings

### *Inclusive Classrooms:*

Inclusive teaching resources from the Center for Teaching and Learning at UW.  Available at: https://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/inclusive-teaching-at-uw/.

Baldasty, J.  (2017, December 14).  Tips and strategies for inclusive teaching.  *Office of the Provost*.  Available at:  http://www.washington.edu/provost/2017/12/14/tips-and-strategies-for-inclusive-teaching/.

Guzman, G.  (2017, September 21).  Fostering Inclusive Classrooms as a TA.  *UW Graduate School*.  Available at:  https://grad.uw.edu/fostering-inclusive-classrooms-as-a-ta/.

### *Religious Diversity in Academia:*

Lelwica, M.  (2008).  Religious diversity: Challenges and opportunities in the college classroom.  *Diversity & Democracy from the Association of American Colleges & Universities*.  Available at: https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/winter/lelwica.

Patel, E.  (2015, March 11).  In promoting campus diversity, don't dismiss religion.  *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.  Available at:  https://www.chronicle.com/article/In-Promoting-Campus-Diversity/228427.

### *Mental Health in Academia:*

Chhabra, A.  (2018, April 19).  Mental health in academia is too often a forgotten footnote: That needs to change.  Science Magazine.  Available at:  http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2018/04/mental-health-academia-too-often-forgotten-footnote-needs-change.

Woolston, C.  (2018, May 02).  Feeling overwhelmed by academia? You are not alone.  *Nature*.  Available at:  https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-04998-1.

The Professor Is In, Archive of Blog Posts on Mental Illness and Academia.  Available at:  https://theprofessorisin.com/category/mental-illness-and-academia/.

Domosh, M.  (2014, October 2).  Toward a More Healthy Discipline.  *AAG News*.  Available at:  http://news.aag.org/tag/mental-health/.

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