University of Virginia
School of Architecture

Racial Equity Audit Findings

Submitted by:

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SOA Foundational Statements of Purpose express a strong vision to chart a bold vision and direction for race and racism understanding at SOA.

Organizational transformation requires an analysis of the current understanding and operations.

Questions that need to be addressed include commentary for the establishment and execution of a racially equitable SOA:

1. What are our current beliefs (employment and instruction) in regards to race and racism?
   - The SOA has created and communicated awareness of the need “to heal as a community through initiating a process of enacting fundamental change” that increases diversity and eradicates inequities. Belief is an acceptance or trust of a statement, in a person or thing. The announcement is inadequate without specific efforts (measurable objectives) to operationalize the statement and process. In addition, the efforts must be public to the entire community. Although urgency is not often applicable to higher education structures and institutions, there has to be an increase in focus and desire to move forward with action items.

2. How does our organizational culture support and apply anti-racism curriculum and equity tools?
   - The SOA anti-racism culture exists in silos. This silo culture occurs in different levels and across levels. There are faculty and staff who share a passionate desire to effect change. In addition, there are students and alumni who strongly wish to change the status quo. (Unfortunately, the students graduate out with disdain and limited interest in having an alumni relationship.) This effort is demonstrated through curriculum, conversations, and requests for more attention to this important matter. However, the support from the larger university is decentralized. That is, each School “must find its own way” and the SOA leadership, more recently, appears to have an interest in increasing support for cultural and policy change. The establishment of the Inclusion + Equity Committee is a positive step in this direction. (However, with an absence of power to implement recommendations, this Committee may not be fully recognized and accepted by the entire faculty and staff.)
   - There is not a full understanding by the SOA community that anti-racism must first address the inequities between White and Black people. Often times organizations wish to “substitute” other racial categories or peoples (e.g., international students/employees) to divert attention away from the most longstanding and disturbing racial imbalance and bias in the U.S. It is important to lift up the importance of intersectionality in equity discussions with strong intention to avoid distraction of the many other forms of oppression that exist for marginalized identities.

Racial Equity Audit Findings
3. Who are the key stakeholders to include in this examination?
   • Students, Staff, Faculty, Administration, and Alumni

4. Which partners (academic, community, and funders) will be affected by SOA anti-racism efforts? How so?
   • Providing an equity focus and perspective addresses the ongoing challenge of being a leading academic institution within UVA, which serves and prepares students for work in a historically white profession and increasingly diverse national demographic.
   • Due to the discomfort that often accompanies race and racism analysis and conversation, it is to be expected that there will not be universal acceptance of the mere mention of this topic. Most Americans do not want to engage in a dialogue about race. (Note: 80% of millennials would rather not discuss it. A majority of white and black adults say they’re uncomfortable broaching the subject with someone of another race. CBS News/New York Times.) To that end, it is posited that some partners will possibly feel that there is too much time and focus on a subject that is not relevant to the operation and success of the SOA.

5. What SOA research is currently aligned with racial equity themes or questions?
   • See Inclusion + Equity Plan. Report findings particular to note:

   Our undergraduate student body has fairly consistently had slightly bigger female than male population over the course of the period covered by the UVA Diversity Dashboard (1991–2018).

   The most dramatic recent trend in the demographics of our undergraduate students was the sharp decline in African American enrollment, which fell from 38 students in 2009 to 18 in 2018 (or a shift from 11% of our undergraduate student body to 7%).

   In 2017, the A-School had 83 students of color (including all students who self-identified as nonwhite, whose race is known, including students who identified as multi-race, but not foreign nationals/resident aliens), or 35% of our graduate population.

   Whereas in 2015, the A-School had 35 international students (non-resident aliens), comprising 20% of the total graduate population, in 2017-2018, there were 106 134 international students, representing 4551% of grad student body, the majority of whom are from China and East Asia.

   There are 59 faculty members, one is African American and two are Latino.

   • Racial Equity Contact Points: Classroom, Research, Instruction, and Special Events. (Each opportunity to connect with students of color should include a faculty member or administrator of color and a race-related focus)

6. Why or why not have SOA alumni of color engaged in SOA activities (instruction, marketing, recruitment, and retention)? What are the barriers to alumni loyalty and support?
• *Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics Are Remaking America*, reissued in 2018, expects whites to become a minority among 18- to 29-year-olds in less than a decade. Whites will make up less than half of the under-18 U.S. population next year.

• In addition to demographic trends, national economic conditions are changing educational outcomes such as enrollment, the importance of credentialing, and academic major selection.

• UVA’s new athletic brand - Athletics can play a very positive role in the culture of a major RI university. Serving as a “front porch” to garner attention to the many academic resources, learning opportunities, and networks at the SOA for interested student and faculty recruits, sporting events should be maximized to engage and make the “pitch.” Research the possibility of partnering with athletics to create student research projects related to the numerous athletics capital improvements (facility/space design) that occur each year. Invite contractors to guest lecture on their design and building philosophy.

SAAM LLC completed the data collection review, translation of SOA materials and “ways of being,” and conducted interviews that assisted in recommendations for the successful achievement of its objectives. This scope of work included engagement (formal and informal) with the following persons: Undergraduate and Graduate Students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni.

Refer to the Racial Equity Audit Presentation Deck.

I.  Recommendations

1. Uniform Glossary – Create and share a one-page race equity document that provides shared language and understanding for all members of the SOA community.

2. Racial Equity training (not diversity, implicit bias or cultural competence) – At a minimum, training should be mandatory for all administrators, staff directors, and faculty that serve on search committees, chair departments, and provide any level of instruction on race, equity, and race-related topics.

3. International Students – As faculty continue to teach and engage with this increasing population, concern will continue to emerge regarding the best way to understand and serve the racial and cultural complexities of SOA diversity provided by their enrollment. International students must have an orientation and education about the U.S. power and race dynamic. This training must happen in and outside of the formal classroom.

4. Black Graduate Students – New creative ways of funding and admission metrics need to be considered for recruitment and retention. Be willing to “step away” from what worked in the past and be open to pushing forward ingenious tactics. The establishment of a think tank that focuses solely on innovation (policy, language, and strategy) in this space is recommended. The removal of standardized testing for admission must be considered to keep pace with peer institutions. Similar to cluster hiring for faculty, this approach is also
recommended for Black graduate students. Note: It is interesting that where the SOA has “control” over admissions, the enrollment of Black graduate students is fewer than the university’s enrollment of Black undergraduate students. That is, where the university manages acceptance and enrollment there is a more positive picture of SOA diversity. A discussion is necessary to further unpack this finding to identify possible learnings.

5. Curriculum – Using a race equity lens, review all of the SOA theory courses to ensure that one culture (Anglo, European) is not being taught and portrayed as the only and most important one to learn and understand. Research the possibility of a 1) first-year seminar that introduces the field of architecture to students and the 2) creation of additional interdepartmental degrees or certificates.

6. Black Faculty - Invite more non-white guest lecturers and researchers to the classroom, not just as special SOA-level lectures, to fill this void of Black faculty. Understand that Black faculty serve many roles on a historically white campus, which is commonly known as “unpaid labor” work. Due to the history of Blacks in academia and structural racism, Black faculty are considered “public scholars,” which requires more engagement with the community, media, and political matters. (See Community-based Participatory Research.) This default weight must be understood and not held against Black scholars. Discussion on the expectations of newly hired Black faculty should be held by the Dean and senior faculty. Potential vs. Performance: Often times within the first two years of hiring, Black faculty are expected to perform as associates or even fulls whereas White junior male faculty are hired on potential and expected to develop and learn with informal mentoring and guidance not available to Black faculty. Consider an annual “Open House” for Black professionals and Black faculty at peer institutions and HBCUs. Build and nurture relationships in the Academy. Consider Professor of the Practice positions.

7. Architecture – This field should be more readily viewed as a career starting point and not just a career landing spot for students. Similar to a history or philosophy major, architecture teaches so many important skills that can lead to careers that are atypical, fun, rewarding, and have high salaries. Promotional and marketing materials must identify the value of the non-architecture training (problem solving, research, time management, taking criticism, team work, design and disruption thinking, and presentation skills) that is learned in an architecture curriculum. Meet with counselors at the UVA Career Center to ensure that the proper and full message is being shared about the discipline and career paths.

8. Alumni Engagement – Black alumni need a warm referral (not a singular request for money) to engage with the SOA community. Although their career path is/was enjoyable and successful, sadly, alumni interviews revealed a common theme of being viewed as “not wanted” by SOA because they did not become architects. Establish a team of alumni ambassadors to guest lecture, mentor, host, and meet with recruits and students in the SOA and beyond. Do not forget to engage with those who are not nationally-recognized alumni.

9. Marketing – Campbell Hall can be used as a mechanism to support multi-culturalism by posting pictures and stories of students and alumni. This design should be intentional in its effort to highlight people of color (not just the typical one photo of a Black person). Also, consider establishing a “Ring of Fame” that highlights outstanding alumni achievements. Marketing of people (physical and digital) will assist in a better connection
with recruits and the community. The SOA website is very text heavy, which does not represent the spirit and learning outcomes of the school nor support current website design research. People give to people. People engage with people, not words. Photos and videos should reflect teamwork, range of emotions, and projects.

10. Development (Fundraising) – Clearly, money matters. Similar to the Curriculum recommendation, the development associates need to use a race equity lens in their engagement with potential donors and partners. All SOA development personnel should enroll in a racial equity training. Learn and connect with the stories of Black alumni through visits with the Luther P. Jackson House events and Black Alumni Weekend.

Summary:

The Equity + Inclusion Plan is an excellent report that details the state of the SOA. This content should be a part of every faculty and staff meeting. (E.g., a different section or finding could be highlighted for discussion.) The Committee must continue this annual work with more engagement by the Dean and the designated person in senior leadership to lead the implementation of recommendations. Every core value and recommendation listed is doable, well-thought out, and will improve the racial equity concern for the SOA.

Accountability is the foundation of change. Is the Dean willing to be bold and courageous? Are senior faculty willing to be bold and courageous? And yet, revolutions start with the people – the grassroots. The SOA must be cognizant of the “winds of change” that can cause structural disruption in a very unpleasant and harmful way. “Chance favors the prepared mind.” Thus, it is prudent to be attentive of ways that promote harmony and empowerment for all. The SOA must continue the urgency of dialogue, research, and implementation of strategies with the entire SOA community to increase racial equity. It only seems quite natural that the SOA could be a leader in equity change if one of the most important characteristics of architecture is to see the beyond the norm, the tradition, and the accepted. Everyone is a winner with full appreciation, participation, and engagement of all individuals.

Respectfully Submitted,

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