

Office of the Dean
Caster Building
3701 Locust Walk
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6214 Tel
215.898.5511 Fax 215.573.2099
www.sp2.upenn.edu

Sara “Sally” Bachman, PhD
Dean

MEMO

To: Laura Perna, Ph.D. Vice Provost for Faculty

From: Sara S. Bachman, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Social Policy & Practice (SP2)

Date: October 15, 2021

Re: Diversity Through Excellence

I am pleased to provide this update to SP2’s Diversity Plan, including information about our Diversity Through Excellence efforts. A central imperative for social work, policy, and practice is the fundamental need to think inclusively about the individuals, groups, and communities these disciplines engage. We are resolute in our intention to educate students of social policy and practice to embrace diversity and intersectionality in all its dimensions, and to create cutting-edge scholarship that enables our field to more effectively promote social justice.

Programming/Events/Initiatives: SP2 continues to offer targeted learning opportunities and programming to promote critical discussions of issues related to diversity, structural inequities and race:

- In July 1, 2020, I created a new senior position, the Associate Dean for Inclusion, and appointed Dr. Joretha Bourjolly to serve in this capacity. A key role for Dr. Bourjolly during the past year was to work with the newly convened Advisory Committee on Race and Social Justice to develop a plan to implement the recommendations from the prior Task Force on Race and Social Justice.
- The Advisory Committee on Race and Social Justice consisted of representatives from the Task Force as well as stakeholder groups within the school community. The committee met regularly to develop a plan to implement the Task Force recommendations, which included all sectors of the school: teaching, research, service, recruitment, hiring and retention, institutional advancement, and school culture. The plan consisted of objectives, desired outcomes, and projected dates for each recommendation. Much of the work described in this memo has grown out of the Task Force and Advisory Committee recommendations.
- The standing faculty voted to approve the creation of a new Standing Committee on Race and Social Justice, effective Fall 2021. The Committee on Race and Social Justice will be an integral component of the school’s infrastructure responsible for advising the Associate Dean for Inclusion and SP2 on strategic thinking, development, implementation, and monitoring of shared school-wide action plans on anti-racism, diversity, inclusion, and social justice. The committee and Associate Dean for Inclusion will partner with the school’s academic, administrative, and student leadership bodies to advance the school’s diversity,

inclusion, and racial and social justice agenda within and across the various areas of SP2. The faculty as a whole will elect the chair of the committee. The committee will consist of three members of the standing faculty, three full-time/part-time lecturers, and three members of the staff. In addition, there will be three advisory student members on the committee. Two of these students will be appointed as Race and Social Justice Fellows and one as the Franklin Innovation Fellow (to focus on art and social justice). The students will be provided a stipend for their work on the committee.

- SP2 applied for and was awarded resources from the Provost's Excellence through Diversity Fund (ETDF) to implement training on Racial Sensitivity and Strategies for Talking about Race for the standing faculty. A key Task Force recommendation is to train faculty to have progressive and constructive conversations about race, racism, and other forms of oppression in SP2's academic programs. To implement this recommendation, the committee identified Dr. Kenneth V. Hardy, a clinical and organizational consultant with many years of experience training human service and academic personnel in the areas of racial trauma and sensitivity and effective race-based communication. A conversation with Dr. Hardy during a standing faculty meeting last spring and subsequent vote confirmed the faculty's decision to work with him this academic year. As academic leaders of the school, it is imperative that the standing faculty demonstrate leadership in creating a culture and community where conversations about difference, racism, and equity can be brave, safe, and authentic, both within and outside of the classroom. Dr. Hardy conducted individual assessment interviews with the standing faculty in August and September. Drawing on these assessment data, he will implement the training with the faculty during the academic year.
- For the third year, the entire SP2 community read one book focused on race, social justice, and diversity. Following a community nominating and voting process, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson, was selected as the One Book, One SP2 choice for Academic Year 2021 – 2022. This book poignantly describes how the caste system originated, was used in India, Nazi Germany, and the United States and is still maintained today. *Caste* has implications for issues of inclusion, diversity, and social justice. Due to increase interest in participating in the One Book discussions, this year's discussions started in August, and will be extended throughout the fall semester. The book discussions have included participation from faculty, staff, student, alums, donors, and board members.
- Last year's One Book, *Tell Me How It Ends*, shed light on the experiences of undocumented youth from Central America who face possible deportation. SP2 offered a number of presentations in the fall and spring semesters including: *Immigrant Youth and Their Right to Peace and Security* (co-sponsored with Peace Day Philly), *Humanizing Asylum for All: A Discussion of Gender-Based Violence in Central America and the Effects of U. S. Policy* (co-sponsored with Penn Carey Law School), and *The Root Causes of the Immigration Crises*. At the culmination of the last academic year, an extensive list of resources pertaining to immigration practice, policy, advocacy, and current events was developed by one of the Race and Social Justice Fellows and added to the SP2 Inclusion page. The other fellow surveyed the student body for recommended books, articles, podcasts, movies, and Instagram sites for resources pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This information was also added to the Inclusion page.
- We have sponsored a number of presentations related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice. For example, we launched the Race and Social Justice Speaker Series, which consisted of several panel discussions hosted by Ben Jealous, a visiting scholar at the Annenberg School of Communication, Penn Carey Law School, and SP2. He serves as President of the People for the American Way and was previously the head of the NAACP. Topics for these panel discussions included: *Evolving Equity and Education*, *The Evolution of the Racism Sequence*, *Women and Wealth*, and *Confronting Racial Injustice and the Inevitable Inequities of the Pandemic*. The MSSP program also hosted a talk on *The Question(s) of the 2011 Tunisian Revolution*.
- We have made and will continue to make curricular changes that promote anti-racism, anti-oppression, intersectionality, inclusion, diversity, and social justice. Starting in Spring 2021, Associate Dean Bourjolly hosted small discussion sessions with faculty teaching in the NPL program about strategies for

incorporating content on racial equity into courses. After several meetings with PhD students and the PhD Steering Committee and Graduate Group, Dr. Bourjolly formed a PhD Curriculum Working Group to begin developing a plan to address concerns students have about the lack of content from scholars of color in the curriculum.

- Penn's School of Social Policy & Practice has officially established the first ever SP2 Social Justice Scholars Program, geared towards funding and fostering an eminent education for graduate students from historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and minority-serving institutions (MSIs). The Social Justice Scholars Program includes full-tuition scholarships and uniquely focused, rigorous academic programming for incoming students who identify as BIPOC from HBCUs and MSIs.

Constructing a deep, distinctive, and impactful learning environment for cohorts of students of color—while removing the financial burden of a graduate education at Penn—the Social Justice Scholars Program simultaneously empowers and enhances the entire student experience and underscores SP2's keen eye on racial justice, anti-colonialism, and abolitionist futures.

At the outset of 2021, three exceptional students, one each who applied to SP2's three master's degree programs were selected for the scholarships. The scholarship recipients were selected and notified by March 15, 2021 and matriculated at SP2 in the Fall of 2021. The long-term intention and goal of the Program is to expand its pool of recipients each year and fully fund the graduate education for 12 students over the next five years.

These students will be assigned an alumni mentor and a faculty advisor. They will also receive funding for travel to a national conference and will have access to four pro-seminars each semester, among other opportunities. The Social Justice Scholars Program will quickly prove to be an essential addition to the School's continuing efforts to affirm diversity, create systemic change within the curriculum and culture of the School, and use its academic assets to combat racism, oppression, and White supremacy.

The SP2 administration and faculty believe the Program reflects the School's commitment to diversity and mission of the passionate pursuit of social innovation, impact, and justice. Long after their time at SP2, graduates of the program will profoundly enrich the diverse SP2 alumni community, as well as the national and international communities that SP2 constituents serve.

- SP2 partnered with The Penn Graduate School of Education to offer a four-part training on Racial Literacy for faculty and staff in March and April 2021. The sessions were led by Dr. Howard Stevenson and the Racial Empowerment Collaborative and included the following topics:

Introduction to Racial Literacy

Participants in the four-session workshop learned 1) why these conversations can be so stressful; 2) how to engage rather than avoid these moments; and 3) how negotiating these conversations can improve workplace climate and performance.

Session 1: Understanding and Reading Microaggressions

Participants learned information about 1) racial microaggressions and what effects they have on people; 2) how to be more aware of their reactions before, during and after stressful racial encounters; 2) how courage comes from developing their own stories of racial experiences.

Session 2: Managing My Reactions during Racial Encounters:

Participants 1) learned how basic mindfulness skills can help them manage thoughts and emotions during racial conversations and 2) how speaking up can disrupt injustice moments and microaggressions.

Session 3: Making Better Decisions during Racial Encounters

Participants learned about 1) how to speak up and make better decisions during racial encounters and 2) practice speaking up during microaggression moments.

Session 4: Follow up for witnesses/bystanders

Participants learned how to 1) react/respond as an ally 2) connect with the individual who was impacted after the incident 3) find ways to address the moment with the individual responsible for the microaggression or racial injustice.

- Dr. Bourjolly collaborated with other Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) leaders across Penn's campus to offer a workshop on microaggressions and their impact on recipients and bystanders.
- For several years, students have called on SP2 to better prepare incoming students from all programs—not just social work—for the challenging conversations and self-reflection about racism and privilege expected in graduate school. Last year, we launched a new online course designed by Dr. Amy Hillier (SP2) and Dr. Beverley Crawford (Dental Medicine) called "*The Penn Experience: Racism, Reconciliation and Engagement.*" All incoming SP2 masters' students were asked to complete the course before classes started in the fall. Doctoral students, faculty, staff, and returning students were strongly encouraged to complete the course over the summer or fall semester. The course introduces historical events, contemporary topics, and concepts such as anti-racism, colorism and intersectionality to offer common language and understanding in order to facilitate deeper conversations and learning inside and outside the classroom. We also intend for the course to reinforce for all members of the SP2 community our commitment to collectively combat racism and other forms of oppression—within ourselves, our school, our professions, and our world. We expect this course to become a permanent part of SP2 and look forward to feedback from members of the SP2 community in order to improve it. Working with the School of Dental Medicine, this year we have made the course available to all Penn Schools. So far, GSE, Law, Vet, Weitzman School of Design, and the MPH program have all begun using the Penn Experience program for their students.
- The School continues to promote the Pipeline for Promise (P4P) program, which works to promote the transition of under-resourced students (especially students of color and first-generation college students) from local community colleges (most often, the Community College of Philadelphia) to more traditional four-year colleges/universities—and eventually to graduate school. We are pleased that we have a P4P student (a CCP graduate) who received his degree from SP2 this year. Our faculty also participated in the University's pipeline strategy group.

Faculty Affairs/Human Resources:

- The FY21 Diversity budget includes an updated calculation that meet the criteria for faculty effort to be included on the Reporting and Budget Guidelines worksheet. Prior years have also been updated to include faculty that should also be included in this category.
- Our five degree programs make a conscious and deliberate effort to create an educational environment that values diversity and views such diversity as a major strength in preparing our students for the work they will be doing to promote a just society. To this end, we hire and make every effort to retain faculty and staff from various racial, economic and cultural backgrounds, as well as religions and sexual orientations, gender identities, and differences in ability, age, and geographic locations.
- The search for standing faculty positions has been attentive to the fact that we need to emphasize diversity and inclusion. We successfully recruited two diverse faculty associate professors in FY2021, and will continue to pursue diverse candidates in the current year.
- We actively recruited for faculty who will be supported by the Provost's Faculty Opportunity Fund, and hope to do so again in the coming year.

- We continue to engage in the Provost's Postdoctoral Fellowship program, and are encouraging faculty to utilize this resource in future years. Our current Postdoctoral Fellows, Michelle Thompson and Nicole Sansone, have proven to be valuable members of the SP2 community.
- As part of Penn Futures, SP2 is a partner in the Calvin Bland Faculty Fellows program, which is aimed at providing support for Penn faculty working on issues related to the lives and life-chances of young black boys/men and their families. These fellowships also include funding for conferences/symposia on the subject and for interdisciplinary collaborations among the Bland Fellows in all three Penn Futures Schools (SP2, GSE, and Nursing). As this program continues to unfurl, it will provide opportunities for faculty and students across all three schools to collaborate on research projects that are interdisciplinary, using methods and approaches that cut across different professional/scholarly traditions.