

Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging at Harvard Kennedy School

Fall 2019

Harvard Kennedy School's mission is to improve public policy and leadership to make people freer, safer, and more prosperous. Diversity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging essential in their own right, as a matter of basic fairness. They are also essential to our ability to achieve excellence in our mission—because drawing the best people to our community and helping them make us better at what we do, because we learn more from people with different perspectives from our own, and because we need to serve diverse societies and work in diverse groups.

Dean Elmendorf created an HKS Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion in 2016, chaired by Professor Archon Fung. That group made recommendations to the Dean and community in 2017—the full report can be read [here](#)—and we have been responding to and building on those recommendation since then. This update summarizes some of the activities that are underway today or that occurred during the previous two academic years.

I. Structural Changes

- Enhancing the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (ODIB), which was created in 2018 and is led by Dr. Robbin Chapman, Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- Search for an Assistant Director of ODIB, with a primary role to work with students and student initiatives, staff and staff initiatives, is underway with a goal for early Fall 2019

II. Data and Information

- Developed and distributed in October 2018 a [report](#) to HKS community with data on the race, gender, and national origin of students, faculty, and staff; next annual report will be distributed in October 2019
- Created and disseminated new information and resources on Title IX and sexual harassment at [HKS "KNet"](#)
- ODIB and HKS's Library and Knowledge Services curated a special collection of diversity materials and online resources for faculty, staff, and students; the collection can be viewed [here](#)
- Created new [KNet portal](#) on diversity, inclusion, and belonging to consolidate information and resources

III. Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Faculty

Curriculum:

- Added new learning opportunities that focus on underrepresented perspectives (in addition to previously existing courses, such as one on disability policy). Examples over the last two years include:

- “Islam in the American Public Sphere: A Case Study for Strategic Diversity Leadership”
- “Gender and Public Policy Seminar: Promoting Diversity in Organizations”
- “Race and the State: The Role of Public Policy in U.S. Racial Inequality”
- “Mass Incarceration”
- “Poverty, Race, and Health” (joint with FAS)
- “Educational Inequality through the Lens of Economics and Race” (joint with GSE)
- “Queer Nation: LGBTQ Protest, Politics, and Policy in the US”
- “Working for Change: Understanding Gender in International Development”
- “Gender and Public Policy Seminar: Promoting Gender Equality at Work”

Pedagogy:

- Providing supports to faculty for inclusive teaching practices.
- Funded development of and training for “Teachly”, a software tool to help faculty engage with students more inclusively; close to 90 classes use this tool over the course of an academic year

Faculty:

- Faculty that have been hired in the past few years enhance HKS faculty diversity regarding gender, race and ethnicity, political views, and sexual orientation
- Research interests of newly hired senior faculty include health disparities based on race, immigration and urban policy, and poverty and bias in the criminal justice system
- Developed and are currently implementing new guidelines for faculty search and review committees that build on existing materials to bring in the latest evidence on inclusive and de-biased search processes

IV. Student Recruiting and Admissions

- Appointed an Administrative Fellow, Dr. Justin Rose, to work with ODIB and Degree Programs Admissions on enhanced recruiting of underrepresented applicants to broaden and strengthen our applicant pool
- Substantial resources were committed to sustain a scholarship program (which originated with a generous gift that has now ended) for students serving underrepresented African-American communities. Fundraising efforts for long-term support continue
- Expanded training of admissions committees and staff on competencies and practices for more inclusive application review and effective engagement with a diverse set of applicants, including trainings on implicit bias
- Changed degree program applications to include optional question on gender identity of applicant and optional essay questions to give applicants an opportunity to discuss how their backgrounds and perspectives would expand and improve discussions in the classroom

- Improved database of recruiting contacts at educational institutions, professional societies, and other organizations that serve underrepresented groups
- Continued exploring ways to admit and support more students with a broader range of qualifications by piloting “conditional deferred admission” to afford applicants the chance to “fill in” gaps in their quantitative or other skills, and piloting review sessions to provide extra ongoing support for students in core courses

IV. Inclusive Spaces

- HKS Artwork Committee developed targeted plan to enhance our common spaces and make them more welcoming and inclusive; implementation of the plan and new artwork is underway.
- Created a “town square” space in the form of a Community Bulletin Board, accessible to the entire community, where community members can share messages, accomplishments, and successes, as well as solicit new connections

Other Selected Recent Activities

- A. Created an additional lactation room and a room for religious observance, meditation practice, and reflection
- B. Worked with program directors, centers, and departments to support their receiving and monitoring information about incidents of bias, and reporting such incidents to HKS leadership team
- C. Conducted “Dean’s Discussions” series—led by faculty—on race, violence, policing, and on civil discourse and disagreement
- D. Supported and participated in the University “pulse” survey on campus climate
- E. Continued support of Black and Latinx Commencements
- F. Continued support of student journals and conferences on issues related to underserved populations
- G. Significantly increased number of participants and academic excellence of those admitted in our Public Policy Leadership Conference (PPLC), a pipeline for undergraduates from diverse backgrounds
- H. Continued meetings between the Senior Associate Dean for Degree Programs and Student Affairs; the Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging; and the leaders of some student groups to understand needs and offer support
- I. Senior leadership participated in diversity, inclusion, and belonging trainings during academic year
- J. Piloted mechanisms for “blind” review of resumes during hiring process for senior staff positions
- K. Created ongoing Human Resources staff training in implicit bias, micro-messaging, bystander intervention, and cross-cultural communication