

Heller Diversity Initiative

June 2014 Message to our Community

This has been a busy and exciting year for the Heller School's Diversity Initiative. After a brief description of the principles that guide the Initiative's work, this update offers a review of this past year's diversity work and an overview of the efforts we will be making in the upcoming year to insure inclusive diversity at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management.

COMMITMENT to EXCELLENCE DRIVES OUR DIVERSITY WORK

The Heller School is committed to diversity as critical to excellence in the classroom, as well as in research, and public and community engagement. Our outstanding work depends on an understanding of social problems in their historical, contemporary, local and global dimensions. We strive to fully comprehend the complexity and interconnectedness of the modern world and to engage meaningfully with people of different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Against this backdrop, we seek to ensure a safe and inclusive learning environment in which community members value the diverse perspectives, experiences and contributions of all others.

Our goal is to make the Heller School, with its rich programmatic offerings, its history of contributions to the fields of policy and management, and its broad geographic, class, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, racial, religious, gender and ethnic representation, a model of global and domestic diversity and equity.

To achieve this goal, Dean Lisa Lynch convened the Heller Diversity Committee, made up of students, faculty and staff, representative of all of Heller's degree programs. In order to reach the entirety of the work we do at Heller, the Committee elected to divide into working groups on training and faculty development, curriculum and pedagogy, research and co-curricular activities, and assessment. At the end of this message, we've attached a list of Diversity Committee members and their working group memberships, but note that working groups are engaging the input of individuals outside of the committee.

DIVERSITY by the NUMBERS

According to Lynn Davis, Assistant Dean for Admissions, Heller's Fall 2013 incoming class was indeed diverse:

- 43% of class were international students, representing 44 countries
- 32% of U.S. students were self-reported students of color

Yet, Davis would be the first to note that even these numbers do not do justice to the intellectual and experiential richness of our community and the value that offers all of us. These figures alone do not reflect the attention Heller pays to providing opportunities for individuals from underrepresented groups and socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals. Nevertheless, the numbers are a good start to an exploration of what an extraordinarily wide-ranging and dynamic population makes up the Heller community.

The STATE of DIVERSITY at HELLER

Heller's richness was on full display at a November 1, 2013 event, The State of Diversity. President Frederick Lawrence gave the keynote address at the standing-room-only program which was sponsored by Dean Lisa Lynch and the Heller Diversity Committee. His remarks included an analysis of several landmark United States Supreme Court equality decisions. After presenting an overview of the cases, President Lawrence described how the Court's decision on affirmative action in admissions might affect access to higher education and its decision to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act had reshaped our concept of rights as well as our family relationships. Lawrence discussed how limitations the Court placed on the Voting Rights Act's protections undermined democratic participation, a critical underpinning of Heller's policy work.

Additional remarks delivered by Dean Lisa Lynch, Professor Ted Johnson, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, Michelle Scichilone, and Heller PhD candidates Callie Watkins and Phomdaen Souvanna further investigated diversity topics relevant to how the Heller community engage with each other and accomplish our research, teaching and learning and public engagement.



Arguably, the State of Diversity's highlight was its conclusion. The Heller Diversity Coalition, a student organization with representatives from all the degree programs, several Heller Student Working Groups and some faculty led an enthusiastic audience of Heller staff, faculty and students in the following pledge.

Heller Diversity and Inclusion Pledge

Pledge 1: *To make Heller a safe and welcoming place for all people.*

Pledge 2: *To be aware of my own biases against people who are different from me, and to hold myself accountable for my actions and words, even if it is uncomfortable.*

Pledge 3: *To engage in respectful dialogue and language that is responsible and sensitive to the opinions of others and free of rancor and attack, in and outside the classroom.*

Pledge 4: *To intentionally and consistently act to address societal inequity and injustice in the broader community.*

Pledge 5: *Ultimately, I pledge to work for a world in which everyone is free to be who they are and can lead fulfilling lives, without having to overcome discrimination.*

This pledge reflects the commitment of the Heller community to the work of self-reflection and is the result of the hard work done by students committed to a broader focus on diversity-related issues at the Heller School. It is a goal of the pledge to help enable conversations to be sparked that start from a place of respect for our peers and a moral commitment to speak up and out about issues of diversity that are so crucial for the work that we do, and will do in the future.



The State of Diversity set the tone for the work of the Diversity Committee throughout the remainder of the 2013-2014 academic year. In keeping with our working group structure, our efforts included attention to diversity training, our curriculum and classroom teaching and interactions, our research and our public engagement. We are committed to measuring our progress toward greater inclusion and are developing the metrics which we will use to assess our progress.

DIVERSITY TRAINING

The Heller Diversity Committee identified diversity training and faculty development as a priority for the School. Our Heller-wide training strategy builds on student and faculty orientation diversity training that the MPP and MBA programs have offered their students and faculty for the past few years.

The Training and Development Working Group includes Alumna [Paula Paris](#), MMHS '79, Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Personnel Walter Leutz, Professor Stan Wallack and MBA/MPP candidate Ev Evnen. During the 2013-14 term, Heller staff, students and faculty participated in two types of training sponsored by the Diversity Committee. In the summer and early fall Anita Hill led informal discussions aimed at viewing graduate work from the perspective of students of color. The goal of the conversations were to a) discover ways in which students of color experience graduate programs differently than white students, b) identify activities that reflect Heller's commitment to improve the experiences of students of color and other under-represented populations, c) examine behavior that detracts from the Heller mission of diversity and inclusion, and d) get suggestions for activities and topics for future faculty/student/staff workshops. Over the summer, 30 Heller faculty and staff participated in the discussions.

Based on these conversations and a number of reports from students and faculty, the Diversity Steering Committee concluded that further diversity training was needed. After reviewing several options, with the help of Linda Shinomoto, Brandeis's Director of Employee Relations, we developed a Diversity and Cultural Awareness Training specifically for the Heller School. In December of 2013, Cynthia Farquhar, Training Specialist in Brandeis's Office for Human Resources, presented the program to Dean Lynch and a group of Program Directors and administrative leaders. Based on the pilot group's recommendations, Ms. Farquhar revised the materials for delivery to the Heller community.

The workshop examines an array of biases and stereotypes and their effect on our work and how we relate to those in our community. Through heightening awareness of our own implicit biases and acknowledging how those biases get communicated, participants learned how to take action to make the classroom and work environment more inclusive. To date, 80 Heller staff, students,

researchers and faculty have participated in the Diversity and Cultural Awareness workshops. The learning that is taking place in these sessions is very promising and the workshops are receiving favorable reviews. In addition, participants have offered many helpful suggestions for improving the work of the Diversity Steering Committee, including better attention to diversity in hiring, making Heller more accessible to people with disabilities, initiating a diversity survey and mandating diversity training, to name a few. These recommendations will inform the various working groups of the Committee as we plan our efforts.

Our training for meaningful diversity and inclusion is ongoing. A recent New York Times [article reporting on bias](#) among graduate school faculty gives pause. Researchers sent letters to 6500 graduate faculty at 259 universities “expressing interest in the professor’s Ph.D. program and seeking guidance.” The letters had identical content and wording, but the researchers varied the names of the fictitious senders. The “senders” names were those that earlier research participants perceived as belonging to either a white, black, Hispanic, Indian or Chinese student. The result of the experiment revealed racial and gender disparity in welcoming students’ participation in graduate work.

“Professors were more responsive to white male students than to female, black, Hispanic, Indian or Chinese students in almost every discipline and across all types of universities. We found the most severe bias in disciplines paying higher faculty salaries and at private universities.” The “discipline of business showed the most bias, with 87 percent of white males receiving a response compared with just 62 percent of all females and minorities combined.” Go to <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/23/7/710> for a full report on the experiment.

The Diversity Steering Committee is committed to learning from this and other research in order to address hidden and overt bias as it presents itself at Heller. Training and faculty development will continue in the fall of 2014. Associate Dean Leutz will announce additional training opportunities, including possibly training during orientation and training on classroom interactions and pedagogy to take place in August and September of 2014.

Though a great deal of thought and effort went into training, the Diversity Committee also initiated reviews of our course offerings, research and communications of our diversity efforts.

CURRICULUM and PEDAGOGY

Our diversity curriculum development, like all of our diversity efforts, will be informed by an assessment of our own offerings as well as those of our peers. Several Heller instructors attend to diverse populations and issues of diversity in what they teach. One Heller program, the Master’s Program in Sustainable International Development, requires that each course syllabus include an explanation of how the class will address diversity. Starting with this fall, the

Master's in Public Policy Program will require that all incoming students complete a recently adopted course, "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Social Policy." We are hopeful that this will add to interest in and increase the number of diversity-focused courses being offered at the Heller School.

In assessing whether and how diversity is reflected in course syllabi, the Diversity Committee built on work done by Senior Scientist and Senior Lecturer Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson '80, PhD '06, for the MPP Program. Under the direction of the Committee, Heller PhD candidate Megan Madison conducted a preliminary review of the syllabi for PhD course offerings. She discovered that a wide variety of identity categories were covered in course assignments and readings, but that there was little consistency within each syllabus or across the program in the type of coverage of diverse populations or diversity issues

The Committee concluded that additional assessment of our program offerings needs to be done to include all of our programs. We determined that in this area, in particular, we can learn from each other and our peers at other institutions. Committee member Nsiah-Jefferson has already begun the work by developing a protocol for reviewing the literature as well as NAFSA: Association of International Educators standards and guidelines, and interviewing individuals at top public policy schools to help us identify best emerging practices.

The Curriculum Group, which includes Lecturer and Assistant Director for Student and Academic Services Mary Brooks, MA/SID '03, Professor Ted Johnson, Nsiah-Jefferson, and SID candidate Ebony Yarbrough, will be meeting with students, faculty, program directors and staff, to identify ways to even better address issues of diversity in our courses and curriculum, to discuss and recommend summer readings for faculty and students and to explore topics for a Heller-wide fall semester book discussion.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES and RESEARCH

Heller is one of the top-ranked policy schools in the country because of our research and co-curricular activities and the outstanding faculty and students it attracts. For two examples of our diversity research and activities that complement the Heller curriculum, read comments by [Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson '80, PhD '06](#) on racial healthcare disparities and [Dolores Acevedo-Garcia](#) on opportunity and quality of life for the country's growing population of diverse children in the [Winter 2012/2013 Heller Alumni Magazine](#).

Professor Susan Parish and Scientist Diana Bowser are leading the Committee's research and co-curricular group. [Professor Parish's](#) work exemplifies the depth of our research agenda as well as our attention to diversity in its broadest sense. Parish studies "a range of topics including health care access for racial and ethnic minority children with autism, reproductive health care

access of women with intellectual disabilities and how impoverished families of children with disabilities stay afloat.” Diana Bowser, director of the MS Program in International Health Policy and Management, focuses on access to health systems from Mississippi to Malawi and points in between.

In the fall of 2014, Susan and Diana will be embarking on a project that will identify the full range of our diversity research and activities for listing on the Heller website. As well, they will showcase our researchers and their work “in the researchers’ own words” with a series of profiles on the site. In addition, the research and co-curricular working group have planned a program, “How Researchers Think about Diversity,” to help Heller faculty and scientists develop their ideas for diversity-inclusive research and to encourage greater interest in diversity research in general.

DIVERSITY SCORECARD and ASSESSMENT

In the fall 2013 term, the Heller Diversity Steering Committee developed a DRAFT Strategic Diversity Leadership Scorecard (SDLS) outlining eighteen variables by which we proposed to measure our success toward diversity and inclusion at Heller. Work on the Scorecard is led by Senior Lecturer and MBA Program Director Brenda Anderson, Assistant Dean for Admissions Lynn Davis, Associate Professor of the Practice and SID Program Associate Director Marion Howard and SID/COEX candidate Lisette Anzoategui.

Currently program/institute/center directors are meeting with their respective faculty/researchers to provide feedback on how the scorecard can best reflect the work of their units and outlining processes for employing the SDLS.

Once the group gets information from the Heller directors, its members will refine the Scorecard and develop a process for its use. Finally, the Scorecard Group will work with programs, centers and institutes, as well as the school as a whole, to set a baseline for and monitor progress toward the diversity objectives. This effort will be managed through the Educational Steering Committee at that group’s monthly academic-year meetings.

GREATER INCLUSION and BETTER COMMUNICATIONS

The future of diversity at Heller requires us to work more inclusively and collaboratively. In the fall of 2014, additional members of the staff will join the Diversity Steering Committee. The new ideas and energy this inclusion brings to the Committee will help us to expand on our work. In fact, it already has. Specifically, we will establish a new group on Work-Life Balance that

will begin to examine how our work practices and policies can enhance the experiences of diverse individuals, especially those with small children or other family care responsibilities.

In addition to regular engagement of the student working groups and attending to diversity at program meetings, the Diversity Committee student representatives, Lisette Anzoategui, Ev Evnen and Ebony Yarbrough, will be exploring new ways to communicate the value of diversity to the entire Heller student body. In the fall of 2014, they will launch a social media campaign to engage more students to share ideas about diversity and their diverse experiences and identities with one another. The campaign will aim to broaden the concept of what “diversity” means and to enable the discovery of connections through common and disparate experiences and identities.

We thank the Heller community for all of its support for the Committee’s Diversity efforts. This outline provides an overview but not the entirety of our diversity work. Our approach to truly inclusive excellence requires us to be on the alert for new ideas and projects. We hope this letter inspires you to share your thoughts with the Diversity Committee at Heller and to work with us so that the academic year of 2014-2015 yields even more robust and meaningful attention to diversity.

