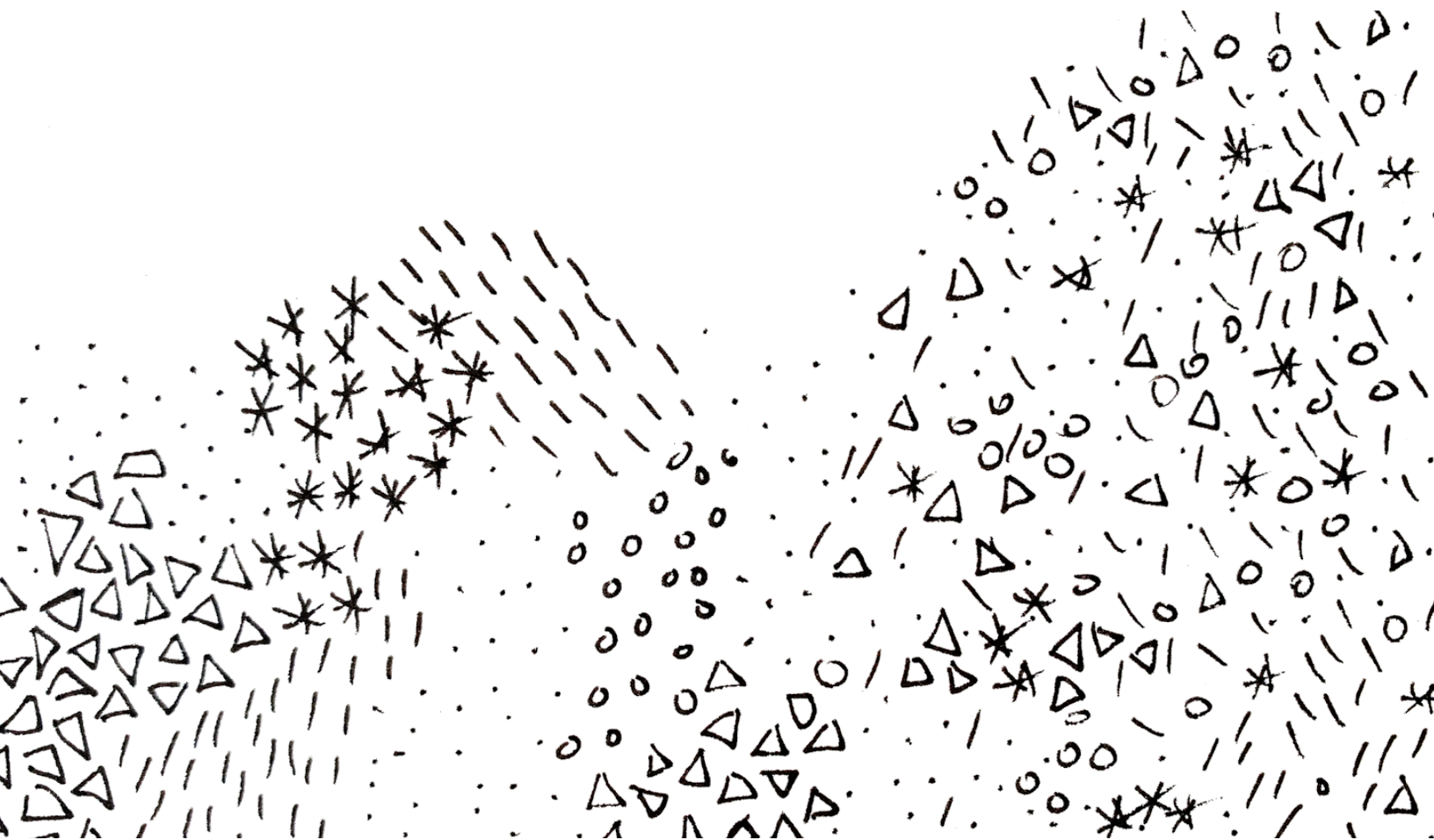
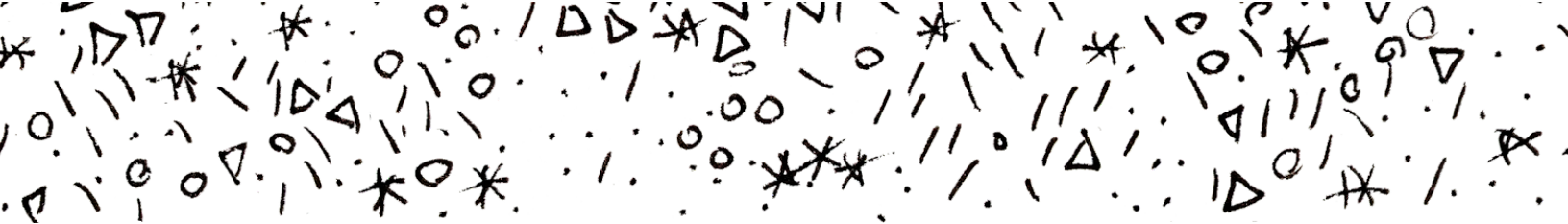


University of Washington
Department of Landscape Architecture
Justice + Equity Task Force
Departmental Recommendations

Summer/Autumn 2020





Introduction

The UW department of Landscape Architecture has a strong commitment to urban ecological design, design as activism and equity in the built environment. Faculty and students alike are passionate about creating a just and sustainable public realm. However, complex histories and intersectional oppressions are woven into the fabric of this country, our built environments, academic institutions and the design professions. Systemic inequities and racial injustices persist, both within the built environment and within our academic department. The consequences of which are ongoing acts of harm and exclusion.

In 2020 we are faced with a pandemic that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities, and national social uprisings that demand racial justice and systemic changes. These events draw attention to centuries of racism and marginalization embedded within the built environment, inspiring many design professions to reflect on their internal structures and begin to make immediate and long term changes. In response, a group of UWLA students, alumni, and local professionals met five times over the summer to identify opportunities within our department to take an anti-racist stance and build a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. The discussions focused on three key areas for change: communications and outreach, curriculum, and departmental culture.

The following recommendations generated by this task force are meant to highlight actionable opportunities to implement necessary changes. We offer them in the spirit of collaboration, with the hope that, together we can create a department that is actively anti-racist. While we understand that our recommendations will not be implemented instantly and entirely, we are optimistic that a meaningful effort will be made, even to the detriment of less critical and outdated elements of our departmental culture and curriculum that perpetuate racism or injustice in any form.

An explicitly anti-racist stance is essential for a just departmental community and a community that is beginning to undo centuries of racist design practice. We acknowledge that the UWLA faculty and staff are committed to addressing racial injustice, partly evidenced by this summer's anti-oppression reading group as well as numerous meaningful conversations, groups, and actions in the last few years. We acknowledge that the faculty are very busy adapting to a rapidly changing world, and deeply appreciate your commitment to centering racial justice within your pedagogy, the built environment, and society.

A few caveats: several of these recommendations are already being addressed within the UWLA community. We have reiterated them here in an attempt to be as comprehensive as possible. As the culture shifts and new and different voices come to the table, the needs of the department and community will change. This document is not a forever road map, but rather a snapshot of the opportunities we see today. Additionally, as both individuals, and as a group we have blind spots. There are forms of systemic racism within our department that we have not identified or addressed within this document, which will undoubtedly be daylighted in the future. It's essential in this work to stay receptive and humble.

How to use this document:

Recommendations are bolded and short. The rest of the accompanying paragraph is intended to provide context or other relevant additional information on the specific recommendation.

- Below are implementation ideas
- Each one hopefully adds more context
- And demonstrates ways to incorporate the recommendation.

Glossary

JEDI - This is an acronym commonly used within the department and this document. It refers to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Equity - Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them. Source:

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Diversity - Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender — the groups that most often come to mind when the term "diversity" is used — but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.

It is important to note that many activists and thinkers critique diversity alone as a strategy. For instance, Baltimore Racial Justice Action states: "Diversity is silent on the subject of equity. In an anti-oppression context, therefore, the issue is not diversity, but rather equity. Often when people talk about diversity, they are thinking only of the "non-dominant" groups."

Source:

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Inclusion - Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Source:

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Social Justice - A broad term for action intended to create genuine equality, fairness and respect among peoples.

Source:

https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/sites/default/files/sections/Diversity/diversity_glossary.pdf.pdf

Spatial Justice - Social justice as it relates space and the built environment. This refers to both the conditions created by the built environment and the effects of injustice upon the built environment.

Environmental Justice - Environmental justice reflects the fundamental reality that vulnerable communities are all too often subject to the disproportionate burden of pollution and contamination.

Source:

<http://www.seattle.gov/utilities/protecting-our-environment/community-programs/environmental-justice-and-service-equity/glossary>

White Supremacy Culture - White Supremacy Culture refers to the dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. These standards may be seen as mainstream, dominant cultural practices; they have evolved from the United States' history of white supremacy. Because it is so normalized it can be hard to see, which only adds to its powerful hold. In many ways, it is indistinguishable from what we might call U.S. culture or norms – a focus on individuals over groups, for example, or an emphasis on the written word as a form of professional communication. But it operates in even more subtle ways, by actually defining what “normal” is – and likewise, what “professional,” “effective,” or even “good” is. In turn, white culture also defines what is not good, “at risk,” or “unsustainable.” White culture values some ways – ways that are more familiar and come more naturally to those from a white, western tradition – of thinking, behaving, deciding, and knowing, while devaluing or rendering invisible other ways. And it does this without ever having to explicitly say so.

Source:

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Anti-racism - Anti-Racism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.

Source:

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Intersectionality - An term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals' lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a White woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

Source:

https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/sites/default/files/sections/Diversity/diversity_glossary.pdf.pdf

Decolonize - We exist within societal structures rooted in historical facts, one of which is colonialism: the policy and practice of acquiring control of land (frequently occupied by people of color), occupying it, and codifying power structures to elevate one race and culture above all others. The international practice of colonization informs the dominant culture that characterizes American society today, driving ideologies and subconscious biases rooted in centuries of racism, classism, and white privilege. In order to dismantle white supremacy and the white dominant culture norms it influences, one must actively “decolonize” the mind, recognizing and counteracting the thoughts, preferences, practices, and behaviors that are deeply rooted vestiges of colonization.

Source:

https://www.usclimatenetwork.org/justice_equity_diversity_and_inclusion

BIPOC - Black, Indigenous, People of Color. The acronym expanded on the older, POC, People of Color, as an attempt to include and foreground the experiences of Black people and Indigenous people. The acronym has been described as “lazy” and an act of “erasure”, assuming the experiences of those various groups are the same. The acronym is used as a shorthand sparingly in this document with the acknowledgement of its imperfection.

Read more:

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html>



Section 1

Communications + Outreach

Reframe JEDI-related goals on the departmental website as opportunities to grow rather than strengths. This shift will improve transparency and demonstrate critical reflexive departmental awareness.

- The JEDI tab on the website should reflect the myriad of justice related efforts by the department.
- The website should list explicit goals and the steps being taken to achieve those goals.

Emphasize that urban ecological design has an explicit focus on social justice on the departmental website and future strategic plans. Ecological health and social equity are inextricably linked. Our departmental identity and mission should reflect these connections rather than compartmentalize them.

- Departmental Strategic Plan should be aspirational, but not impossible with clear short-term and long-term strategies for accountability.
- Explicitly connect Urban Ecological Focus with social, spatial, and environmental justice.

Recruit and hire individuals for tenure track positions whose work focuses on community engagement and practice with underrepresented and BIPOC populations. We understand this as an already stated goal of the department and that a main limitation is funding another faculty member position.

- This is a necessary aspect of making our department a safe and desirable place for potential students from historically underrepresented communities.
- Share explicit goals around diversifying faculty to meet demand for multiple perspectives and changing departmental demographics.

Recruit and hire BIPOC professionals, designers, artists, and community members for non-tenure track positions as instructors, lecturers, and guest speakers. This is a short term goal designed to support a long term goal of a more diverse faculty.

- Actively invite and collaborate with BIPOC instructors and engage BIPOC perspectives within the curriculum.
- Recruit professionals who are better positioned to help positively engage with communities of color and cultivate long-term relationships.
- Prioritize funding instructors and courses that center spatial justice.
- Provide direct mentorship for incoming BIPOC instructors.
- Foster a welcoming and safe climate for short term BIPOC instructors.
- As the discipline has been historically exclusive, hiring BIPOC instructors may include hiring people who are not licensed landscape architects but are engaged in designing the built environment (see “Black Landscapes Matter” by Kofi Boone).

Seek expertise from other departments within and beyond the CBE to further educate our faculty, instructors and students. Our college and university have many opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and a vast array of resources on topics of justice and equity in higher education.

- Help to establish a college wide course of justice in the built environment or support the URBDP Race and Justice course to increase sections per quarter.
- Facilitate more direct access or mentorship with students to faculty in other departments.
- Connect to other departments and colleges who are doing work viewed as aspirational.

Develop best practices for what to do when JEDI topics or concerns are brought up in class or about a course.

- Train faculty and instructors on in-the-moment responses. For example, not centering the intentions of the person who caused harm, and not policing the tone of those who raised issues.
- Provide clear and accessible resources for faculty and instructors in seeking guidance. This includes professionals trained in facilitation and mediation.
- Offer a clear reporting mechanism for students to report inequitable or discriminatory actions. This includes options for managing the actions taken: a timeline of how an issue is handled, anonymity of the reporting, etc.
- Provide clear resources for students who've reported issues. This is not therapy, rather resources to help hold the department accountable.

Seek out and build relationships with private firms and non-profit organizations that are doing positive work related to design justice.

- Foster these relationships to create a robust network of private firms for potential internships, job opportunities, and learning opportunities.
- Invite folks from these places for guest speaking engagements.

Consistently integrate K-12 outreach programs into curriculum or extra-curricular activities. Practices related to youth outreach ebb and flow within our program. This is an essential aspect of equity within landscape architecture. It is important to build consistency and programmatic structure into youth outreach efforts.

- Connect to related efforts within the PAC, professional firms and other CBE departments.
- Incentivize student involvement in the design and implementation of youth outreach.
- Connect youth outreach programs to course credit or paid student positions.
- Create mentorship programs between landscape architecture students and middle/high school students.



Section 2

Curriculum

Center social justice as the lens through which we approach curriculum and pedagogy. Anti-racism should not be incorporated into a few occasional courses but rather be conceptualized as a framework for the study of urban design and landscape architecture.

- All students should understand inequity in landscape architectural history as well as current conditions within the profession.
- Each course requires a prerequisite anti-racist reading or acknowledgement, think Land Acknowledgment but for racial justice, and is to be engaged throughout each course as well.

Center social justice in advanced studio courses. As the backbone of our design program, it is crucial our studio curriculum begins a process of shifting towards a more anti-racist and decolonial practice. Students should have more opportunities to engage with design as a tool of anti-racism and colonialism. We recognize this may be a lot to ask of first year students as they are introduced to the design process.

- Offer at least one social justice centered advanced studio every quarter (or at least two per year), and require students to take at least one social justice centered advanced studio in order to graduate.
- Encourage more precedent projects and design projects from outside of Eurocentric perspective. This includes a critical look at Eurocentric design, infrastructure, materials, aesthetics, spatial preferences, etc.

Position 300 level courses, and also pre-program, 100- and 200-level courses to focus on spatial justice. The emphasis of these introductory courses as courses about justice will both provide an ethical foundation for students beginning their study of landscape architecture as well as a recruitment tool aimed at the wider audience of the UW community.

- Potentially draw undergraduate students from departments across the university: CBE students, Social Sciences, Public Health students, Social Work students, etc.
- Leverage adjunct faculty positions for recruitment to attract a wider range of potential undergraduate students for the BLA program.
- Students can begin their exploration into landscape architecture thinking about social/spatial justice in the built environment.

Develop a required course on spatial justice in landscape architecture in the first year of the program. This course could take many forms and include a long list of topics related to design justice. See potential topics in recommendation below.

Develop a Design Justice concentration, certificate, or minor. This will attract students interested in design justice, and create spaces for Black students, Indigenous students and Students of Color to learn how to use design to unmake systems of oppression in the built environment. It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of our field in unmaking these systems. Below are a list of topics that could be their own courses or studio focus, or combined into a spatial justice course.

- Develop a course on community engagement that explores the nuances of successful, non-extractive participatory practices that empower communities over long term connections and compensate for community members' time.
- Develop a course on accessible landscapes and the history or accessibility.
- Design-build studios working with local underserved communities.
 - Consider this [model](#) of local community engagement from the Rural Studio as a precedent.

Connect the department's ecological focus and plant curriculum to Indigenous landscape management and plant practices. In order to decolonize our curriculum we must incorporate ethnobotanical content into studios, planting design courses, and plant related seminars. It is important to interrogate how we as spatial designers and landscape architects relate to the land and non-human life.

- Seek mutually enriching collaboration with Indigenous communities to gain knowledge about landscape design and management. These relationships must be reciprocal and non-extractive.
 - Refer to this [program](#) at the University of British Columbia, on Indigenous Community Planning.
- Invite Indigenous guest lecturers and Indigenous instructors regularly for various learning opportunities.
- Compensate Indigenous practitioners and guest lecturers for their time. Incorporate local Indigenous plant names into our Plants curriculum.
- Introduce plant relationship webs into Plants curriculum - not just plants as isolated objects.
- Professor Peña from the anthropology department (teaches about agroecology, food sovereignty and related topics) would be a good resource for having conversations about Indigenous land management and plant relationships.

Update Research Methods course. Colonialism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and other forms of oppression were integral to the development of academic research, and any attempt to engage in equitable research practices must start with a recognition and analysis of the historic and ongoing impacts of the research community.

- The course should include an initial overview of the historically harmful aspects of academic research, multiple epistemologies, a recognition of power relations inherent in much research, and provide avenues for a respectful co-production of knowledge for positive change.
- Offer an anti-racist, anti-oppressive and decolonial approach to research methods in contemporary social sciences and landscape architecture specifically.

Update History curriculum and related Theory courses. It is important to acknowledge the Eurocentric whiteness of the landscape architectural historical canon. Colonial and racist systemic structures have influenced cultural biases in the way landscape architectural history is taught and framed. It is important to have multiple voices designing our history curriculum.

- All students should understand historical inequities and injustices in landscape architectural history and the history of the built environment.
- Seek opportunities to support research and writing on landscape outside of traditional Eurocentric and colonial based systems and voices.

- Understand the significance of non-Eurocentric content being deprioritized in curriculum.
- Collaborate with voices beyond the department who occupy different cultural, ethnic, and racial perspectives on landscape history and theory.
- Incorporate land use history and consider the political/social ramifications of colonial narratives.
- Consider the creation of a global landscape history course.
- Consider the creation of a local landscape history course which focuses on our ecoregion and the North American west coast.
- Incorporate interrogation of aesthetics as deeply cultural ideas, often rooted in whiteness.
- Integrate the theory and history curriculums so that theory is situated within its historical context, and history is contextualized by theoretical critiques. This may look like blending the departmental offerings so that there is a 2 quarter continuous sequence of an integrated course telling the history of theory and its contemporaneous impact on the built environment.

Update Professional Practice course. The Professional Practice curriculum provides a platform to begin to dissect problematic and racist features of our design practice post graduation.

- Demonstrate models on non-traditional practice and non-traditional career paths in landscape architecture, including non-profit work, and design activism routes.
- Interrogate traditional models and provide examples of new types of firms doing “traditional” practice in new ways, examples of groups like NAMLA, NOMA, Design As Protest, and other design justice collectives.
- Contextualize professionalisation within structures of racial and class hierarchies and exclusion.

Adapt relevant [Design Justice Demands](#) set forth by the *Design as Protest Collective*.

- Discontinue and prohibit studio courses related to supporting the carceral state, including designing for prisons and police stations.
- Reject CEPTED tactics as an element of design education and take critical stance against tactics.
- Replace the use of Area Median Income (AMI) in discourse around affordability with more equitable metrics.



Section 3

Departmental Culture

Consider and address the ways white supremacy is embedded in the culture of the department and design education as a whole. Design fields and design education are largely based on tenets of white supremacy and are exclusive to those with divergent learning styles or those who practice alternative cultural expressions of professionalism. As a world-class program that has the potential to truly reflect and be created by its diverse voices, UW landscape architecture has the resilience and strength to adapt to the needs of today and create a just and equitable future. Anti-racist work comes not only from our outward actions, but from our inner culture. A deep and thoughtful exploration of how white supremacy is embedded in the department’s cultural norms will take time and patience, and is necessary for meaningful change.

- Features of white supremacy include intense course loads, rapid and frequent deadlines, and vague assignments.
- Consider the department’s position in a lineage of Eurocentric education and ways of thinking.
- Consider the ways in which academic and professional standards can reflect white supremacist thinking.
- Consider Tema Okun’s article [“White Supremacy Culture”](#)

All faculty, instructors, lecturers, and staff must partake in equity and anti-racist trainings. We propose two types of training at different depths. One that is required for everyone to be repeated at regular intervals. A second is opt-in and facilitates individuals doing a deeper dive into anti-racist pedagogy that requires a sincere and long term commitment.

- All instructors should understand the difference between equality, equity, and justice.
- Visiting lecturers should be aware of basic anti-racist practices taken up by the department and be held accountable to those standards.
- Departmental budgets should reflect an investment in faculty and staff training.

Support BIPOC students. It is essential to work to create a safe, welcoming, and supportive climate for BIPOC students within the department.

- Consider differing financial needs and different financial futures that students are faced with.
- Better integrate international students within our community.
- Do not require “perfect academic English” from students.
- Create a more robust TAs program to leverage work study opportunities for Black students, Indigenous students, International students, and Students of Color.
- Quality check course deadlines and pedagogical practices that could be harmful to non-white students.

- Consider student sensitivities to various places to be studied or visited. This can include rural places, explicitly racist or otherwise exclusive places.
- Develop stronger mentorship opportunities between faculty, staff and students of color.
- Strengthen mentorships of first-generation students.
- Create spaces for BIPOC students, faculty, and staff to meet and connect without white colleagues and peers.
- Create safe and secure channels for BIPOC students to report issues to faculty and staff.
- Consider separate, opt-in training / education sessions for white students, on how they can better create a supportive environment for their non-white peers.

Attract and recruit BIPOC Students. The demographics of our department (and college) do not reflect the demographics of the larger University, the City of Seattle, or our country. Nor do our demographics represent the communities we strive to work with. This is an essential problem. *Attracting and recruiting* more racially and ethnically diverse cohorts of students follows *supporting* students because our departmental culture must begin to shift before we ask students of color to either do the work of shifting culture or assimilate to standards of whiteness.

- Learn from design programs adeptly attracting more diverse student cohorts.
- Energetically recruit Black students, Indigenous students and Students of Color.
- Actively attract BIPOC visiting scholars.
- Make connections with more undergraduate programs (including within UW) or high schools.
- Establish relationships with applicants from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Black Student Union from UW and other similar regional BIPOC student groups.
- Establish relationships with local technical schools and community colleges. For example, students graduating from the Horticulture program at South Seattle College can enter our program with the ability to skip certain required courses.
 - Refer to City College of San Francisco’s architecture program which frequently prepares students to transfer into UC Berkeley’s undergraduate program.
- Connect to service programs such as DirtCorps, EarthCorps, TerraCorps, and AmeriCorps for recruitment.
- Clarify Western Regional Graduate Exchange Program for removing financial barriers in recruitment material. Better publicizing this opportunity may encourage more applicants overall.
- Increased portfolio reviews for applicants and potential applicants.

Invite BIPOC professionals, designers, artists and community members to participate in reviews, social events, the PAC, and other relationship building opportunities. We acknowledge the complexity involved in seeking out BIPOC folks for crucial, multiple perspectives while not tokenizing or further burdening individuals.

- Pay individuals for their time.
- Foster these relationships to create a robust network of private firms for potential internships, job opportunities, mentorships and learning opportunities.
- Consider how virtual events greatly increase the number of potential BIPOC reviewers and speakers.

Students should graduate from the program with cultural competency. This broadly refers to a set of professional skills and cultural competencies that are beneficial for graduating a largely anti-racist workforce engaged in design justice. These lists are non-exhaustive.

- **Professional Skills:**
- Conversation facilitation + managing interpersonal power and privilege
- Grant writing
- Audience sensitivity, including around graphics and communication
- Accessible representation
- Active listening skills
- Critical cartography

- **Cultural Competencies:**
- History of racist urban design and environmental injustice
- History of racist and colonial environmentalism and conservation science
- Inequities in the contemporary architecture, building, and construction industry
- Landscape architecture's complicity in inequities in the built environment
- The nuances of successful, non-extractive community engagement
- The nuances of successful, non-extractive research
- Empathizing with how people historically and currently experience places differently
- Seeing ADA guidelines not as a constraint to be worked around
- Understanding demographics/socioeconomics of space and land use



Conclusion

This task force and the ensuing recommendations would not have been possible without the passionate and dutiful engagement of its members as well as the open support of the department and faculty. This document is intended as an ongoing commitment to racial justice that will grow and evolve along with our department and profession. As a group of individuals who remain dedicated to reimagining the world and it's future, our power lies in our collective capacity to self-reflect, care for our community, and commit to positive change.

Members

Students:

Alanna Matteson
Alexandra Burgos
Alicia Kellogg
Allie Rowe
Brian Deck
Claudia Sackett Hennum
Erynne Van Zee
Jake Minden
Kate Wellens
Krista Doersch
Rebecca Bachman
Stephanie Roh
Tim Spenser

Alumni:

Nina Mross
Rich Desanto

Professionals:

Christine Abbott
Nic Morin
Tori Shao

Resources

Dismantling Racism Works web workbook: <https://www.dismantlingracism.org>

White Supremacy Culture:

<https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-characteristics.html>

Black Landscapes Matter: <http://groundupjournal.org/blacklandscapesmatter>

City College of San Francisco Architecture Program *Amily Huang is the phenomenal chair of this program.
<https://www.ccsf.edu/degrees-certificates/architecture>