

November 23, 2020

Dear Sam Fox School Racial Justice Task Force Members,

Thank you again for your service to the school this summer, and the careful care with which you took on your charge. I'm writing to provide you an update on the next steps regarding the Task Force report.

### **Staff Hiring**

As recommended by the Task Force, we are moving forward with hiring a full-time staff position to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Sam Fox School. The position description is currently in review by WashU HR, and we anticipate the listing being posted in the next several weeks. Once this position has been hired, we anticipate that they will take the lead on a number of the Task Force suggestions. We are grateful to this group for flagging and clarifying the need for this role, and are thrilled to be able to commit to this role.

### **Communication with the school**

We have already begun to make progress on this. The Diversity section on the Sam Fox School website contains updates on the demands we've received, and this letter and your report will also be shared there. By Thanksgiving, I expect that we will release an update letter to the Sam Fox School community highlighting the current efforts, challenges, and status of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in the Sam Fox School. Going forward, we anticipate providing these updates once per semester, with a more substantive report produced each summer. Your feedback on the content of this report back is crucial to ensuring we're communicating the information that most interests you. *Liz Kramer* is responsible for this initiative.

### **Supporting Diverse Students to Choose the Sam Fox School**

Most requests in this category are focused on graduate recruitment, with a smaller number that impact undergraduate recruitment.

#### *Graduate*

Graduate recruitment is coordinated by the individual program chairs, with support from Taylor Yocom. Some efforts that are already underway include:

- Hiring Melisa Betts Sanders to continue ongoing efforts to support outreach to HBCU students for graduate architecture recruitment in the 2020-2021 academic year, and to increase outreach to these students for graduate architecture. This builds on several years of past efforts, previously led by Melisa and Charles Brown.
- Adding new, racially diverse staff and faculty to portfolio review for MFA-IVC.

From the Task Force report, we are planning to move the following forward in the next 12 months:

- Create a content piece for graduate students that highlights student support and resources on campus and at the Sam Fox School. *Shreyas Ravikrishnan* will lead this initiative.
- Work to make connections between prospective students and current students. *Taylor Yocom* will work with the new SFS Black Students Network, GAO, and GAC to develop scripts and opportunities for students to connect peer-to-peer.
- Host a preview event for Black and/or students of color. We anticipate this will happen during fall 2021, when students are in the application phase of the process. *Taylor Yocom* will support coordination with the chairs.

In addition, the graduate chairs have made the following recommendations prompted by the Task Force's recommendations:

- Increase focus on recruitment of current undergraduate students, particularly Black, African American, and students of color, into the MFA-IVC program.

#### *Undergraduate*

While many of the recommendations were focused on graduate students, the undergraduate chairs have a few actions they are hoping to include to impact undergraduate admissions:

- Advocate to the University to WashU Pledge commitment to transfer students from the St. Louis region.
- Include commitment to WashU Pledge in communication material for Missouri and Southern Illinois students to further emphasize that the program is free for them.

#### *Other*

- The Alberti Program is not able to run with youth this year due to COVID-19 restrictions and staffing limitations. However, a curriculum development program call the Alberti Charrettes is running in fall 2020, and may run in spring 2021 pending capacity.
- The Design Thinking class in the College Prep Program ran in summer 2020, and we anticipate it will run in summer 2021, with Audra Hubble leading the program. We will work with Audra to support connections to undergraduate recruitment and application for Art and Architecture.

#### *Delayed*

We anticipate delaying following recommendations from the report to the next academic year, given the capacity of staff and faculty at this time.

- Mapping and assessment of the recruitment and retention processes for each program. Going through this process with faculty, staff, and students, would be enormously beneficial to our understanding and support of students throughout their time at the Sam Fox School, and we intend to undertake this process in the 21-22 academic year.
- Shared classes or workshops with students at HBCUs. We are supportive of this idea, but have limited capacity for implementation at this time. We anticipate revisiting this idea in the 21-22 academic year.

### **Strengthening Student Organizations and Relationships**

Thanks to the members of the Task Force, the SFS Black Students Network has already formed and has met with Black students from across the Sam Fox School. I also want to thank the SFS Black Students Network for hosting a mixer for students to connect with each other, and proactively developing programming that feels relevant to their needs.

As of now, we have not progressed around supporting a student-curated or juried exhibition, supporting NOMAS explicitly, or adding additional communication content around our Black and African American students, alumni, and faculty. We are working internally to determine how to move forward.

### **Fostering a Shared Culture in Classrooms and Studio**

There were 75 active participants in the BASELINES2020 event hosted by the Fairness & Diversity committee. The committee is working towards identifying next steps from this event, which currently involve hosting future iterations, and building a Sam Fox School culture including these baselines as part of all syllabi going forward.

The Fairness & Diversity Committee is also evaluating training options for the school going forward. Right now, they anticipate inviting George Aye to return to do a follow-up workshop with the faculty about power in the classroom, as well as additional trainings in partnership with others on campus.

Additionally, in a survey of the faculty, we learned that many faculty desire training on how to incorporate issues of diversity, inclusion, and racial justice into their curriculum, particularly about how to facilitate conversations, addressing deeper nuance about stressors around race, and retraining around canons and precedents with which they are unfamiliar. Our primary concern, and that of the faculty, is sufficient time to participate in and incorporate these trainings into their work.

Again, thank you so much for your service on the Task Force, and your ongoing support of these efforts within the Sam Fox School. I welcome your feedback, questions, and concerns, as well as your involvement in implementing these important next steps. As a note, we will post your report and this response on our website in short order in order to keep the broader community informed; please feel free to share this update as you see fit.

Please be in touch,

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