

**Weitzman School of Design
Diversity Action Plan Update – 2021-2022
October 14, 2022**

1. Introduction

Launched after the transformative year of 2020, the Weitzman School Justice and Belonging (JxB) Initiative invites students, faculty, and staff from all over the world to become more aware of their power as learners, educators, and facilitators at an elite university, and to make design justice a central motivation for the Weitzman community as we navigate experiences and systems of oppression, also known as caste. In the book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson describes caste as an often-unspoken structure for defining who is unwelcome versus welcome, and who has or is denied privileges. Caste shapes beliefs, actions, and, ultimately, systems of power. Design responds to and can perpetuate these systems of power, and it is incumbent on us as designers, planners, and artists to decide whether to use this power *over* others or *with* others; the Weitzman JxB initiative aims for the latter.

At Weitzman, we are working to create a shared understanding of how to undo and unlearn the systems of caste through codesign and curiosity about those who are ‘othered.’ We focus that codesign and curiosity work on our curriculum, community engagement, and culture with the goals of becoming more culturally welcoming, socially accountable, and intellectually transformative place. We have organized these ambitious actions around five primary areas detailed below: 1) Recruitment of faculty, staff, and students, 2) Creating a more inclusive community via training and programming, 3) Knowledge production/preparing students/advancing the professions, 4) Financial support, and 5) Infrastructure, Transparency, and Reporting.

2. Recruitment of Faculty, Staff, and Students

In the past year, the School’s assertive outreach efforts contributed to an increase in the number and percentage of BIPOC faculty, staff, and students joining the Weitzman School community.

- From Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 to FY 2022, the percentage of standing faculty from minority groups increased from 13% to 17%, and the percentage of standing faculty from underrepresented minority groups increased from 9% to 11%.
- In FY 2022 the percentage of female standing faculty in Weitzman remained at 43% -- the same percentage as in FY 2021.
- Weitzman has been determined in its efforts to recruit and hire outstanding new faculty members from underrepresented groups. In July 2022, the School welcomed a new African American assistant professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning, and another African American Presidential Professor will join Weitzman in January 2023 to become the

new Director of the Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites. Two more Latinx faculty will join the Weitzman faculty in July 2023.

- The percentage of BIPOC staff increased from 16% in AY 2021 to 24% in AY 2022.
- The percentage of BIPOC students in the AY 2021-2022 Academic Year increased from 38% in AY 21 to 42% in AY 22. The percentage of students who self-identified as URM increased from 25% in fall AY 21 to 27% in AY 22.
- Weitzman joined a consortium of nearly two dozen other design schools in the *Deans Equity and Inclusion Initiative*. This undertaking is devoted to nurturing a diverse population of emerging scholars by providing mentorship to BIPOC assistant professors and post-docs and includes the nearly two dozen major design schools in the U.S. This year, the School's Director of Justice and Belonging is participating in the second cohort of DEII Fellows, hosted by the Harvard Dumbarton Oaks Library and Institute in Washington D.C.

3. Creating a More Inclusive Community – Training and Programming

The Weitzman School continued efforts to create an inclusive environment that embraces difference and welcomes diverse perspectives through trainings, lectures, events, and socially engaged special initiatives. Below are some examples.

- **Virtual Reality Experiences.** In a new workshop called *Immersive Dialogues on Design Justice*, Justice and Belonging Director Dr. Matthew Kenyatta facilitated an experiential reality enhanced discussion this past August with incoming students from two departments (Landscape Architecture and Historic Preservation) about their power as professionals to understand and address core social and environmental concerns like blight, blindness, and anti-Blackness locally and beyond. He co-created the workshop in collaboration with Penn Libraries' newly appointed Emerging & Digital Literacy Designer and her team of technologists who supplied equipment like Google Cardboards and Quest headsets. The plan is to offer this workshop to more departments in the School by request.
- **Penn Experience 3.0.** Also in August, incoming Weitzman students from three of the School's five departments participated in the *Penn Experience 2.0 Initiative* during respective departments' summer workshops and new student orientation programs. Developed by Penn faculty across campus, the Penn Experience 2.0 modules focus on implicit bias, racism, inequity, and reconciliation, including Penn's history of racism and the University's movement toward greater equity and inclusion.
- **Design for Belonging: How to Build Inclusion and Collaboration in Your Communities.** As part of Weitzman's schoolwide New Student Orientation on August 26, 2022, Dr. Susie Wise presented incoming Weitzman students with concrete frameworks to help participants understand how to create a sense of belonging in the built environment and public space and how design work can reduce othering and encourage a greater sense belonging. Future workshops with Dr. Wise are also being planned for Weitzman faculty and staff. Dr. Wise

has a PhD in Learning Sciences and Technology Design from Stanford University and creates learning experiences focused on innovation practices and equity design.

- **Hidden Histories Tours.** As part of the School's New Student Orientation, Dr. Matt Kenyatta developed, led, and narrated guided tours highlighting some of the hidden histories of Penn's most iconic as well as lesser-known sites. These 30-minute *Hidden History Tours* seek to complicate glossy myths about the built environment at Penn and reveal legacies of injustice that have yet to be confronted.
- **The Design Justice Working Group.** The *Design Justice Working Group (DJWG)*, a coalition of faculty, staff, students, and alumni from the Department of Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning (LARP), held monthly meetings throughout the year and issued its second annual year-end report. The DJWG was formed in September 2020 following the murder of George Floyd to lead the department of landscape architecture's determination to become an actively antiracist institution. The report contained updates on the DJWG's seven primary goals, which include: (1) recruit and retain more LARP faculty and staff members of color; (2) recruit, support, and retain BIPOC students, (3) review and restructure the curriculum to ensure a more diverse representation of voices and perspectives, including BIPOC voices; (4) conduct ongoing antiracism and diversity and inclusion training for faculty, staff, and students; (5) increase the diversity of studio critics, jurors, and other academic participants in the department; (6) work to build meaningful relationships with communities of color beyond the confines of the university; and (7) adopt new Indigenous acknowledgement protocols for a range of situations including formal gatherings, public events, syllabi and departmental publications.
- **The Hometowns Project,** an exhibit of photographs from Weitzman faculty, staff, and students picturing public spaces and structures from neighborhoods across the globe, highlights the hometowns of many members of the Weitzman's community, which includes nearly 800 students, 235 faculty and 70 staff from 30 countries and 42 US states and territories. Participants were invited to submit images of their hometowns featuring local people engaging in activities in public spaces, along with descriptions of the setting and the activities. The goal of the exhibition is to celebrate the richness of our community's cultural diversity and remind us of what brings us together. It will be an annual installation in the winter/spring semester.
- **The Weitzman BIPOC Alumni Career Conversation Series (BACCS)** held two events in 2022 to support current students as well as alumni. These events were called "Seeking Inclusiveness and Belonging Amid Feelings of Otherness" and "The Emotional Tax on BIPOC Professionals."
- **CPCRS Dialogues.** The *Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites*, CPCRS, held a series of [CPCRS Dialogues](#), which aim to raise visibility, deepen discussion, and spread the word about civil rights heritage and the equity, memory, design, legal, and other issues brought to light by its preservation. The CPCRS Dialogues, which feature BIPOC speakers from a variety of disciplines, encourage engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders in

the study of Black heritage. CPCRS and JxB will be hosting a tour of the historic neighborhood that W.E.B. Du Bois studied which birthed urban sociology, the Seventh Ward, led by Amy Hillier and facilitated by Dr. Matt Kenyatta.

- **Justice Alliance for Design Education in Philadelphia (JADE-PHL)** is a consortium of greater Philadelphia architecture schools (Penn, Drexel, Jefferson, Temple, the Community College of Philadelphia, and Penn State which has a studio in the city), the local American Institute of Architects chapter, and local design firms, convened by the Philadelphia Center for Architecture and Design. The Dean and Weitzman faculty are active participants in this group, which is working to develop new initiatives to attract and retain more students of color to the architecture field, advocate for the needs of underrepresented individuals in the profession and provide new educational opportunities to consider the impact of design work on communities of color. In May 2022, JADE sponsored a day-long symposium for representatives from local architecture schools – including three Weitzman faculty, staff of PennPraxis, and student Design Fellows – to begin to chart a new course for design education and consider the following questions: (1) are design studios reinforcing race, gender, and class differences? (2) Are professors prepared to handle difficult and/or uncomfortable discussions and experiences that may arise from community interactions? (3) What training and experience do professors have that might help or hurt the situation? The goal of the summit was to create a model for a citywide community engaged studio.
- **West Philadelphia Community Advisory Board and Grant Program.** PennPraxis, the practice arm of the Weitzman School of Design, created a West Philadelphia community advisory board and designed and administered an inclusive grants program as part of a University community benefits agreement process connected to the development of Amy Gutmann Hall. Praxis convened an intergenerational advisory group, and worked with its members to do outreach and make positive connections with 70 community-based organizations in West Philadelphia, review grant proposals from those groups, and select 7 energetic organizations that serve, and are led by, people of color working to advance community goals defined by the advisory group.
- **Studio+.** This past spring, Weitzman launched *Studio+*, a school-wide interdisciplinary design / build studio focused on community-engaged design, planning, art and preservation in Philadelphia – a major and permanent Weitzman School social justice initiative coordinated by PennPraxis. The aims of *Studio +* are impact in Philadelphia communities, long-term dialogue between communities of color and the university to shape new agendas and partnerships, and skills development for Weitzman students. The concept for the first two years of *Studio +* is the Public School as Equity Infrastructure, which elevates the role of public-school buildings as community havens and as city-wide equity infrastructure, while making concrete physical improvements to schools. PennPraxis partnered with the School District of Philadelphia and Penn’s *Netter Center for Community Partnerships* to implement the project and received a \$100,000 *Projects for Progress* award from the *Office of Social Equity and Community* to build The Porch, an outdoor stage, garden and science classroom design developed in the studio. Over 6 weeks this past summer, 19 West Philadelphia High School students worked with five Weitzman students and two faculty to build a highly successful first phase of The Porch.

- **Design to Thrive.** PennPraxis received a \$7.5M from Lori Kanter Tritsch (MArch'85) and William P. Lauder (W'83) to continue *Design to Thrive*, a summer youth development initiative that served 364 high school-aged youth of color in New York City and Philadelphia in the summers of 2020, 2021 and 2022. The *Design to Thrive* studios are a major learning investment based on the high engagement / deep experience model of design education at the Weitzman School of Design. The studios are taught by Weitzman graduate students, seniors in The College, and young alumni in Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Fine Arts, supported by faculty and PennPraxis. The aim of *Design to Thrive* is to address the opportunity gap for low-income youth of color, to advance skills development and awareness of the relevance of design, planning, art and preservation professions, and to increase diversity in design schools and professions over the long run.
- **Community Collaborations.** PennPraxis created a number of opportunities for students and faculty to join forces with Black, Latino and Indigenous leaders its Design Fellows program https://issuu.com/pennndesign/docs/2022_designfellows. Design Fellows worked with the Ramapough Lenape Turtle Clan on the design of a new, sustainable Lenape community that is to be funded by the federal and state governments as part of an environmental reparations agreement, and on research to document and preserve sacred ceremonial landscapes along the historic Minisink Trail. Design Fellows worked with faculty to implement a leadership program for young Latino leaders in an area of Chester County with many recent immigrants. Design Fellows supported the formation of the United South / Southwest Coalition, a coalition of 21 community and environmental justice organizations in Philadelphia with research, organizing, outreach materials and facilitation.
- **Rising Scholar Success Academy.** This summer, Weitzman faculty participated in the Penn Rising Scholar Success Academy (Penn-RSSA) and offered a one-week introduction to the design professions as part of a free, virtual, six-week summer program designed for rising high school seniors in Philadelphia School District or Archdiocese schools.

4. Knowledge Production/Preparing Students/Advancing the Professions

Weitzman recognizes the role that the design, planning, fine arts, and preservation professions have played in advancing asymmetries of power and inequity, and perpetuating spatial segregation, resource extraction, and cultural erasure. Accordingly, we are committed to contributing new knowledge to the professions we serve and re-examining and revising the School's various curricula to address this history of injustice.

- **Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites (CPCRS) Symposium.** On November 18 and 19, 2021, the [Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites \(CPCRS\)](#), whose goal is to advance the understanding and sustainable conservation of heritage sites relating to African American struggles for equality, from before the passage of the 14th Amendment to the present day, hosted a symposium entitled, "Preserving and Sustaining Civil Rights Sites," which convened scholars and practitioners who are deeply engaged in preserving sites, stories, and organizations representing the heritage of civil rights in the US. As noted above, CPCRS also offered a series of virtual events (the CPCRS Dialogues) to scrutinize the nation's collective understanding of what constitutes a civil rights heritage site and advance

the means and methods by which “sites” are preserved. The events bring the interdisciplinary research, advocacy, and partnerships of CPC are to Penn and public audiences in an accessible, affordable, and digestible digital format.

- Amber Wiley, an award-winning architectural and urban historian whose teaching and research center on social aspects of design and how it affects urban communities, will join the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design as Presidential Associate Professor and the inaugural Matt and Erika Nord Director of CPCRS in January 2023.
- **The Center for Architectural Conservation** at Weitzman, which is directed by Frank Matero, professor and chair in the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, received a \$1.3 million grant from the Getty Foundation to develop a conservation and management plan and professional training program for Wupatki National Monument in Arizona, which was once home to the ancestors of the Hopi, Zuni, Navajo, Yavapai, Havasupai, Hualapai, and several bands of Apache and Paiute people.
- **Increased Focus on Decolonization, Community Engagement, and Racial Equity in the Classroom.** The Department of Architecture (ARCH) shifted several courses that addressed decolonization, diasporas, and more. For example, History & Theory of Architecture was taught by Dr. Matt Kenyatta in Fall 2021, which taught global diasporic architecture traditions listed as underrepresented area of “knowledge equity” from North America, India, North Africa, and beyond, while a second-year Architecture course offered postcolonial architecture precedents and a second-year studio addressed urban housing and offered a workshop called Public Commons facilitated by Dr. Matt Kenyatta.
- The City and Regional Planning (CPLN) Department invited the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to discuss racial equity’s importance in classrooms through multiple workshops, and the CPLN Department Chair set aside a fund of up to \$5,000 to help faculty pay for community engagement expenses. Several courses have been designated as ABCS courses with the Netter Center

5. Financial Support

In our efforts to create a more just and equitable community, Weitzman recognizes the need to address the current challenges facing financially strained students and implement new initiatives and policies to help prevent economic exclusion.

- In the past year, the School continued to distribute funding to students in need during the second year of the *Student Emergency Fund*. Weitzman has spent over \$40K to support students since the Emergency Fund’s inception two years ago.
- In addition to offering Dean’s Diversity Fellowships for students whose backgrounds and experiences demonstrate the ability to contribute to increasing socioeconomic and multicultural diversity awareness at Weitzman, the School recently launched the *Moelis Scholars Program*, which supports students in the Master of City Planning program with a commitment to diversity who are interested in housing and community and economic development.

- Weitzman continues to award the *Julian Abele Fellowship in Architecture*, which was established in Fiscal Year 2021 and is given annually to a graduate architecture student or students once the fund is fully endowed. The Fellowship is named for the first Black architect to graduate from Penn in 1902.
- In Fiscal Year 2022, Weitzman increased funding for diversity scholarships for students by 19% when compared to FY 2021.

6. Infrastructure, Transparency, and Reporting

Weitzman recognizes that our efforts to become a more equitable, just, and anti-racist community are ongoing, and that open lines of communication and trust among students, faculty, and staff, are critical. We are not just committed to taking action – but to regularly monitoring and documenting our progress across our operations. The School continued its commitment to tracking progress on the goals and objectives outlined in our Excellence Through Diversity Plan. Please see the attached *JxB Dashboard* summarizing our progress for FY 22.

Weitzman’s Director of Justice and Belonging also restructured the Schoolwide JxB Committee as a focus group that produced several programming and curriculum suggestions including how to address Pan-Asian communities in courses, low-income students, and better orient all new design students about racism and inequality.

7. Conclusion: Working Towards Justice and Belongingness at Weitzman

In *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Wilkerson writes, “*The price of privilege is the moral duty to act when one sees another person treated unfairly. And the least that a person in the dominant caste can do is not make the pain any worse.*” Weitzman has a longstanding commitment to cultivating an environment that celebrates and promotes diversity, champions social equity, and is inclusive of all members of our community. Yet, over the past two years, we have shifted our focus from using our privilege not simply to avoid “making the pain worse” but to promoting a greater sense of *justice* by planning to make structural changes that ensure everyone in our community has access to equal opportunities and that everyone in our community knows that they *belong*. While *diversity* is about representation (are there enough people from different backgrounds here?), *inclusion* is about action (what can we do to make people with different identities feel welcome?), and *equity* is about giving everyone access to the same opportunities (recognizing that some members of our community experience unfair advantages or barriers), creating a sense of *belonging* means that *everyone* in our community feels valued and is not afraid to ask questions or raises issues.

As we continue to deepen these efforts, we aim to give people plain and digestible actions as alternative ways to demonstrate belongingness. We continue to support our students and faculty who bring ideas forward for celebrating and exploring the richness of our diasporic community in humble and spectacular ways (i.e., food, exhibits). Doing all of this together is a recipe for intellectual transformation. At Weitzman, we want to tell the world through our collective actions that we not only help reduce harm, but we are *reimagining* a diverse society that does not

depend on harmful hierarchies to simply exist, especially in urban environments. Making that shared, equitable world is our superpower as designers of many stripes and disciplines. We look forward to working together in the coming year to continue building the foundation for this expansive vision and to increasing our commitments to real and lasting change.

Attachments:

- Weitzman 2021-2022 Justice and Belonging (JxB) Dashboard

Weitzman Justice & Belonging (JxB) Outcomes Dashboard for Fiscal Year 2022

Goal	Performance Measure	Outcome/Results	Change
Recruit more diverse faculty, staff, and students	Increase the percentage of BIPOC and URM students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of BIPOC US students increased from 38% in Fall 2020 (FY 21) to 42% in Fall 2021 (FY 22) % of US URM students increased from 25% in Fall 2020 (FY 21) to 27% in Fall 2021 (FY 22) 	+4% +2%
	Increase the percentage of BIPOC and URM standing faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of BIPOC standing faculty increased from 13% in FY 21 to 17% in FY 22 % of URM standing faculty Increased from 9% in FY 21 to 11% in FY 22 	+4% +2%
	Increase the percentage of female standing faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of female standing faculty remained at 43% in FY 21 and FY 22 	--
	Increase the percentage of BIPOC staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of BIPOC staff increased from 16% in FY 21 to 24% in FY 22 	+8%
Create a more inclusive community	Hold dedicated events for BIPOC alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held two BIPOC Alumni Career Conversation Series (BACCS) events in 2021 	✓
	Develop and implement programs to promote a culture of inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curated the Hometowns Project, an exhibit of photographs from faculty, staff, and students picturing public spaces and structures from neighborhoods across the globe 	✓
	Increase engagement with West Philadelphia community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received \$7.5 million gift (endowed) to continue Design to Thrive, which offers design education and career exploration opportunities to high school students 	✓
	Provide better community engagement training to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched Studio+, a Praxis-run interdisciplinary studio designed to better prepare students to engage with communities 	✓
	Incorporate more discussion of Justice & Belonging in new student orientations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporated Penn Experience 2.0 video modules, which focus on racism, inequity, and reconciliation, into departments' New Student Orientation (NSO) schedules Included keynote presentation on Design for Belonging in schoolwide New Student Orientation Conducted Hidden Histories tour of Penn as part of NSO 	✓

Goal	Performance Measure	Outcome/Results	Change
<p>Prepare students to excel in multicultural world and advance the design professions</p>	<p>Host equity course review workshops facilitated by the Center for Teaching and Learning to review & restructure curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations to Weitzman School full faculty and to the Department of City and Regional Planning 	<p>✓</p>
	<p>Review of voices presented, community engagement, and research agenda setting process at all Weitzman research centers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PennPraxis increased engagement with West and Southwest Philadelphia; received Penn Projects for Progress Award to continue work with West Philadelphia and Sayre High Schools • The Kleinman Center continued to implement its DEI Plan, including increasing research, papers, podcasts, and events from a wider group of authors/presenters and supporting research related to justice and equity in energy 	<p>✓</p>
	<p>Diversify Weitzman’s partners and critics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased BIPOC studio critics and guest speakers 	<p>✓</p>
	<p>Develop additional center(s) and sponsored research focused on issues affecting BIPOC communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites (CPCRS) established; Director position endowed • Center for Architectural Conservation received \$1.3M from the Getty Foundation to help preserve sacred places of the indigenous people of the Southwest, working with the Hopi Nation and the National Park Service 	<p>✓</p>
<p>Provide greater financial support to students</p>	<p>Continued to administer the Weitzman Student Emergency Fund</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to distribute funding to students in need during the second year of the Student Emergency Fund 	<p>✓</p>
	<p>Increase financial aid for BIPOC students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased the total amount of diversity scholarships by 19% from FY 21 to FY 22 • Offered the first Julian Abele Fellowship in Architecture 	<p>✓</p>
<p>Strengthen DEI/JxB infrastructure and increase transparency</p>	<p>Dedicate more resources/establish a more robust infrastructure to support DEI initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired the School’s first Director of Justice & Belonging (JxB), Dr. Matt Kenyatta 	<p>✓</p>
	<p>Hold ourselves accountable and measure performance related to DEI initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established a detailed DEI/JxB workplan with clear outcomes; completed JxB dashboard for FY22 	<p>✓</p>