

Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work Diversity and Inclusion Report

July 2020

In May 2020, the L&S Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee created a report called “Best practices for enabling departmental diversity, equity and inclusion.” They listed four best practices that they are looking for among L&S departments and schools:

Best practice 1: State your principles and values

Best practice 2: Create curricular interventions

Best practice 3: Increase recruitment

Best practice 4: Develop outreach opportunities

Below we summarize our current efforts under each of that committee’s four best practices, as well as our efforts on what we see as an additional fifth best practice.

Best practice 5: Implement efforts to improve inclusion

Our school’s own Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (see first two pages in the Appendix) organizes by goals rather than best practices. But for this report, we organize a summary of our efforts by the L&S Best Practices.

Best practice 1: State your principles and values

- A number of years ago we created a statement on diversity, which is found on our web site on a page titled *Focus on Diversity*.
- Our *Focus on Diversity* web page also describes many of our initiatives around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I).
- In summer 2020 we created an additional page on our web site called *Supporting Black Lives* where we highlight a statement from the Director on BLM and house our different efforts in this area (e.g., a blog, weekly lunch and learns).
- We make frequent statements (via e-mail and social media) to our stakeholders around major racial and social justice events on campus and in the world. Indeed, we have made significant increases in our social media presence on social justice issues in recent years.
- In our monthly All School Meetings (faculty and staff), DE&I items are on the agenda for every meeting.
- We conduct annual surveys of our students, which include requesting feedback on climate and DE&I issues.
- In our teaching evaluations, we ask students to rate faculty on items related to DE&I.
- Our admissions committee created new essay questions on our applications for our BSW and MSW programs that signal our priority in admitting students who are committed to diversity, equity, and racial and social justice.
- We attend to diversity in our promotional materials, presentations, and in our hallways and learning spaces (building committee) to promote a safe and welcoming environment.

- The website for our annual *Social Workers Confronting Racial Injustice* annual conference affirms our commitment to racial justice in the school and the community.
- At our major events we start with a recognition that university occupies ancestral Ho-Chunk land.
- In 2019/20 we developed a *Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, and will start implementing it in fall 2020. This plan strongly communicates our values and goals.
- The Director of the School has been participating in a national workgroup on DE&I issues in schools of social work; this year we sent two clinical faculty members to attend a meeting of this group at the fall 2019 annual meeting of the Council on Social Work Education.

Best practice 2: Create curricular interventions

- Every year we have a faculty retreat focusing on a particular issue related to diversity, equity, and inclusion as it relates to teaching. This coming fall, the retreat will focus on developing an implementation plan for our new *DE&I Strategic Plan*, which will be implemented by work of all committees/groups in the school.
- The Committee on Diversity sponsors an annual *SSW Community Read* that focuses on a book that addresses a racial or social justice issue. The committee chooses a handful of books, and then students, faculty, and staff vote on the final choice. Last year, our book was *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander. The school purchases enough books for all faculty, staff, and students. The Committee on Diversity collaborated with the conference planning committee to coordinate the SSW Community Read and the school's Social Workers Confronting Racial Injustice Conference by inviting Michelle Alexander as a keynote speaker. A student-led book club provided another opportunity to discuss the book further. The committee also encouraged faculty and instructors to include chapters of the book in their syllabi. A Canvas site was created to support faculty and students in including content from the book in class discussion and curriculum planning. We have found that faculty and instructors continue to be interested in and able to utilize the community read in their classes. For 2020/21, the school has selected Ada Deer's, *Making a Difference: My Fight for Native Rights and Social Justice*.
- In line with the goal to provide training as well as foster safer and supportive learning environments, the Committee on Diversity planned three faculty *Teaching Circles* last year but only ended up hosting two, due to Covid-19. The topics included incorporating *The New Jim Crow* into field education courses, and effectively incorporating guest speakers' intersectional identities into courses. Both were well attended and included rich discussion, exploration of resource materials, and professional consultation. The third planned event was to be on universal design in which McBurney Disability Resource Center would come and speak about making courses more accessible to all students. In previous years, other examples of teaching circle topics include: intersectionality in the classroom, adding diverse

voices and materials in syllabi, journal club on facilitating an inclusive classroom, and strategies for increasing the inclusion of LGBTQ persons.

- We offer fall orientation and training for Agency Supervisors, who supervise our students in field placements each year, and this training includes topics related to DE&I (e.g., cultural humility, intersectionality).
- One way we assess faculty on their coverage of diverse voices and topics in their courses is through specific items on our student course evaluations.
- We have been working to make sure that we infuse diverse perspectives and readings/materials throughout our courses by assessing syllabi and holding trainings/discussions for faculty to help them improve their syllabi.
- We offer *SW100: So you want to change the world* to freshmen as a gateway course to our majors, hoping to bring in a diverse group of freshmen and cover important social justice issues and approaches. Since our recent incoming freshmen have been more diverse in general, we hope to get them interested in social work and create a pathway to our BSW and MSW.
- We are creating a day-long addition to our regular orientation for incoming BSW and MSW students called JEDI training (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) to provide information, perspective, and discussion to launch our new students from day 1 with language, expectation, and confidence to address critical issues in their classrooms and field placements. We were going to launch it this fall 2020 but decided not to since it would have to be online – we want to offer it in person for at least the first time we offer it. We hope to offer it in fall 2021.
- We hold a *Prisoner Re-entry Simulation* for about 100 of our students each year, bringing in the Madison Urban Ministry to run this effective and powerful simulation of the social and economic challenges facing people as they leave prison.
- This year we purchased MP3 players, headphones, and accompanying curriculum to conduct a *Hearing Voices* simulation in the school, simulating what it can be like to have schizophrenia.
- We hold an annual spring student symposium where BSW and MSW students present their year-long Change Agent Projects to community partners, faculty, agency supervisors, and other students, highlighting the work students contribute to making a difference in their field placements and community. Many of these projects focus on more inclusive practices and addressing equity issues within client systems.
- We bring in diverse guest speakers for public talks and professional development sessions with students. As just one example, in fall 2019, we hosted Desmond Patton (Columbia University) for a 2-day event, including a keynote talk and a professional development lunch with SSW PhD students.
- We find ways to integrate our classes with DE&I efforts outside of the classroom. For example, in 2019/20, the Policy and Administration Field Unit worked together on a class change agent project to amplify the school's annual Social Workers Confronting Racial Injustice Conference and support concrete anti-racist action by social workers. This project had three main priorities. First, students wanted to support the 500 conference attendees to move from theory into practice by creating space for reflection and by encouraging discussion at and after the conference on

accountable follow-through and practice. Second, the students wanted to make sure that learning and materials from the conference were available and accessible after the conference for both attendees and those in the community who could not attend. The students gathered material and created session summaries for the web and created a newsletter that helped participants stay in touch with the project. Finally, the students documented and summarized their work and created a toolkit that describes for social workers how to carry forward this work of accountability, consistency, and transformation as they confront racial injustice in coming years. The students also held three post-conference events.

- We supplement DE&I training for many of our students by financially supporting them to attend conferences or external trainings such as: YWCA Racial Justice Summit, 4W Conference on Women, Gender & Well-Being, National Association of Black Social Workers Annual Conference, Latino Social Workers Annual Conference.

Best practice 3: Increase recruitment

- In 2019, we created a new Recruitment and Awards Specialist position in the school, and she has created a strategic plan for recruitment that includes the aim to diversify our student body. The three general approaches she is using are building relationships, attending and holding events, and developing and improving marketing materials. See full plan for details, but part of our short-term plan is to work to develop relationships with Alverno College in Milwaukee, and the two Wisconsin Tribal Colleges. Long-term plans involve developing partnerships with HBCUs and HSIs. With this new position, we are able to attend more recruitment fairs and events than in the past (including fairs at universities with more diverse groups of students to recruit from), as well as to hold more frequent info sessions (both online and in person (except under Covid-19)).
- We reached out to all McNair students around the U.S. graduating in Spring 2020 with a BSW to encourage them to consider applying to the PhD Program.
- We have increased the amount of money we give to students for scholarships by almost 500% in the last four years. The vast majority of that increase is for admission scholarships used to recruit a more diverse student body.
- We have been participating in the TOP program to recruit faculty from under-represented groups. Though our TOP candidates have not yet worked out, we did hire one faculty member of color this year (without TOP support).
- We send at least one faculty member to WISELI trainings each year for new ideas on diversifying our applicant pools and improving our recruitment processes.
- Our admissions committee created new questions on our admissions applications for our BSW and MSW program that ask applicants how they will contribute to diversity in the program and by asking them to write an essay on a racial or social justice issue (details of the instructions are longer!) These questions both signal our priorities and allow us to choose students based on our assessment of their commitment to diversity, equity, and social justice.
- We work to identify professionals from diverse backgrounds in the community who we can work with to prepare them for potential lecturer positions with us

(providing development opportunities through guest lectures, having them serve as preceptors, etc.).

- We do not use the GRE in our MSW admissions and are suspending it for PhD admissions for 2021.
- We require diversity statements from applicants in our faculty recruitment.
- We have recruited a diverse group as members of our Board of Visitors and our Professional Consultative Committee to consult with us.
- Our PhD Committee hosts a visit day each year for admitted doctoral students and pays for the travel of (at least) our students from underrepresented groups.
- We post all hiring opportunities in places that may capture the interest of a more diverse group of applicants (e.g., newsletters, listservs, and conference bulletins of affinity groups).

Best practice 4: Develop outreach opportunities

- We work closely with almost every human service organization and agency in the area (and many others throughout the state) to provide the hundreds of supervised field placement opportunities for our students. We have a field office and field faculty who interact regularly with all of these organizations – organizations that usually have our alumni on staff. Our faculty members also provide presentations for many of these organizations and serve on boards.
- We offer free or low-cost continuing education professional training to many of our community partners.
- We offer public lectures and lunch and learn opportunities on topics related to diversity, equity and inclusion (e.g., *Dorothy Pearson Lecture in Equity and Social Justice*, *Title IV-E Child Welfare Dialogs on Racial Justice*, *panel on Challenges Facing Immigrants in our Community*)
- This summer we started weekly events at noon on Fridays (virtually) focused on issues related to the Black Lives Matter movement. This series will continue into the fall.
- We send faculty, advisors, or recruitment staff to professional meetings (such as the National Association of Black Social Workers annual meeting, Latino Social Workers Annual Conference).
- Our annual *Social Workers Confronting Racial Injustice Conference* is attended by 500 community partners, faculty, and students and offers a full day of concurrent workshops all on this topic. We reach out to community partners from across the state to present workshops at the conference, aiming to represent people from diverse backgrounds and viewpoints. Using donor funds, we are able to provide this workshop at low cost to community social workers, and we provide a full day of CEU credits.
- As described earlier, the Policy and Administration Field unit worked together on a class change agent project to amplify the school's annual Social Workers Confronting Racial Injustice Conference and support concrete anti-racist action by social workers. Beyond the details of this work provided earlier, these students hosted three follow-up events for the school and community members. The first was an accountability and action reflection session held over lunch one month after the

conference – in facilitated discussions, participants shared their reflections on what they had learned and how their thinking and practice had been changed by the conference. The second was an interactive workshop held off campus that applied systems thinking ideas from the conference to issues of race and racism in child protective service work. The third was a lunch session which reprised a popular workshop from the conference on anti-racist social work. These events helped support students and social workers in the community to connect more deeply with the content from the conference in order to find ways to act on the information.

Best practice 5: Implement efforts to improve inclusion

We aim to create a school community where every person feels welcome, valued, heard, and well equipped to work to overcome historical injustices as part of their personal and professional development. While we aspire to have a diverse SSW community, diversity in itself does not ensure equity and inclusion. As such, we aim to provide an environment that promotes optimal learning, support, and growth for all our students, staff, and faculty, particularly those who hold identities that are typically marginalized in our society.

- In all our work on DE&I, we emphasize that diversifying faculty, staff, and students isn't enough – we need to simultaneously work to create a more inclusive environment.
- We make efforts to improve the welcoming environment of physical spaces (noted earlier) through pictures, signage, etc.
- We have a private room with campus designation for either nursing/pumping or religious worship.
- We fundraise to provide funds for DE&I activities. For example, with initial funds from a member of our Board of Visitors, we started the *Tamara Grigsby Memorial Fund for Diversity and Inclusion* – this fund supports some of our inclusion efforts and activities.
- We sponsor an annual welcome picnic at a park for all faculty, staff, and students at the beginning of the year, and an additional one for doctoral students.
- The Committee on Diversity begins the school year with a *Creating Spaces* kick off potluck. *Creating Spaces* events are informal gatherings designed to build community within our school, particularly for students who identify as people of color, LGBTQ+, immigrants, having differing abilities, and/or additional marginalized identities. In the fall event we come together over food and welcome new or incoming students. We have found that this is a great way to build connection within the school not only for students but also with faculty and staff. (Covid pre-empted our spring event last year).
- At the New Student Orientation each year we hold a session called *A Welcoming Environment* that discusses the importance of and approaches to sustaining an environment where all members of the community feel supported.
- Our doctoral program assigns peer mentors for all incoming students.
- Our doctoral program invited Caitlyn Lamonte of the Multicultural Student Center to hold focus groups for our PhD students (in response to findings from the program

climate survey in Spring 2019); two focus groups were held and a report with recommendations to improve inclusion are forthcoming.

- PhD student Seungmi Cho delivered a workshop on “Centering our safety in unsafe spaces: A social justice approach to professional development.”
- Our doctoral director organized “basecamp” meetings for PhD students attending the annual conference of the *Society on Social Work Research* to help students navigate the conference.
- We organize and sponsor a Phi Alpha Honor Society for BSW students, celebrating the accomplishments of top BSW students, engaging them in group activities, and fostering a sense of community and commitment to the profession.
- For 2019/20, the Committee on Diversity focused on two central goals for the year: (1) improving school climate by increasing opportunities to build community, ensuring transparency, and building skills for students, staff and faculty to dialogue about social justice, diversity issues, etc., and (2) training for students, staff, faculty and community that includes leveraging diversity and intersectionality to improve course content and create safer spaces and supportive learning environments.
- We put student representatives on all school committees as one way to include student voices and participation.
- In 2019 we started a Student Emergency Fund for our graduate students, where we will provide about \$500 in grants (up to \$1,000 in special circumstances – these are not loans) to students who are having a financial crisis that might derail their progress. We have partnered with the financial aid office and the Dean of Students office to develop this. The School of Social Work is paying for it, but the Dean of Students office is implementing it (so we don’t have to make hard decisions ourselves about who is deserving of these funds).
- We offer a variety of Lunch and Learns on social justice topics throughout the year – hosted by faculty, staff, and students (we do not refer to brown bags – we use the term lunch and learn because of the historic reference to brown bag tests that assess black people’s skin color and privilege light skin).
- We have taken advantage of the provost’s *Diversity Initiative* funds for retaining tenure track faculty of color.
- Every spring we collect data from our BSW and MSW students (including climate data). We discuss the results at an All School meeting in the fall and use the data to inform changes. Last year our Doctoral Program also conducted a climate survey of our current doctoral students, with follow-up discussion sessions with doctoral students to debrief the results.
- We offer four graduation celebrations beyond what the university offers, to provide a more personal experience and celebration for our graduates, their families, and our faculty and staff.
- Our Committee on Diversity sponsored our second annual *School of Social Work Community Read*. We purchased and handed out to faculty, staff, and students, copies of “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander. Michelle was also the keynote speaker at our annual Social Workers Confronting Racial Injustice Conference. Students organized a lunch and learn to discuss the book.

- We have a student group called Social Workers of Color Student Coalition, an LGBTQ+ and Allies group, a Christian Social Workers group, a Social Work Student Union, a Radical Social Work group, and a Students for Social Welfare Group. These student groups all have a faculty liaison, and each aims to facilitate a sense of community among students, among other goals. We provide funds for some of these groups to support some of their activities.
- We hold a doctoral luncheon for all doctoral students and faculty, with a presentation from a faculty member, and presented doctoral student awards. This is held on spring visit day for our doctoral program so that prospective students can be a part of this positive event.
- At the suggestion of students, the Committee on Diversity purchased a large discussion board for the student lounge. It was installed two years ago and is periodically monitored by committee members. The board is well utilized by students who respond to discussion questions, and it advertises school and community events. The purpose of the board was to create another avenue for connection and community, and it seems to be meeting that goal.
- Last year we raised the minimum wage for student workers in the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work to \$15/hour.
- We have funded more equity and merit raises and bonuses for faculty and staff in recent years.
- We have increased our funds for providing professional development opportunities for staff.
- We give out an *Outstanding Staff Member* award each year, and this year we are adding an award so that there will be one for university staff and one for academic staff (now they will both come with money).
- We nominate staff, faculty, and students for awards, which boosts a sense of appreciation even if they don't win.
- Last year we implemented *Workday Improvement Plan* for staff, providing each staff member a choice of tablet or other item to improve their work or work environment.
- We provide free student, faculty, and staff attendance at our *Social Workers Confronting Racial Injustice* annual conference.
- Last year we installed a video screen at the building entrance to announce events, celebrate accomplishments, and highlight current events pertaining to social justice.
- We hold a series of cultural dialogues about every other year, for faculty, staff, and students.
- We sent a message to all faculty and staff with information on improving LGBTQ inclusion, including pronoun usage in e-mail, in effort to be more welcoming.
- Our students continue to push efforts of equity and justice. For example, students in SW 639: GLBT Individuals and Social Welfare produced a zine, *Narratives of LGBTQ + Community at UW- Madison's School of Social Work*. This work can inform our inclusion efforts moving forward.

APPENDIX: FIRST TWO PAGES OF THE DE&I STRATEGIC PLAN WORKING DRAFT

UW-Madison Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan -- Working Draft 7/25/20

Social justice, cultural humility, and anti-oppressive practice are values central to the social work profession and the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work (SSW). We strive to promote diversity in race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, income, marital status, class, political beliefs, religion, immigration, and mental and physical ability. We aim to recognize and celebrate the importance of individuals' intersecting identities. We seek to enhance human well-being and promote human rights as well as social and economic justice to achieve an equitable, healthy, and productive society. We aim to create a SSW community where every person feels welcome, valued, and well equipped to work to overcome historical injustices as part of their personal and professional development.

To do so requires understanding and dismantling both personal biases (unconscious and conscious) and systemic injustices within our society and school. This work must happen through efforts large and small, day-in and day-out, and is not the responsibility of any one group at the school -- it is the responsibility of all members of our community. Nevertheless, particular responsibility lies with staff, faculty, and school administrators, positioned to suggest, initiate, and/or lead structural changes within the school that challenge and undo systemic oppression and promote environments conducive to change and growth.

Students, faculty, and staff in the school have undertaken a number of efforts to improve diversity, equity and inclusion with special attention to: the curriculum; school climate; recruitment and retention of a diverse student body, faculty, and staff; and diversity and inclusion training of staff, faculty, community partners, and students with particular attention to addressing diversity from an intersectional lens. To build upon this work, and take advantage of recent improvements in donor funding to the school, we are creating this **Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I)**. The **objective** of this strategic plan process is to scrutinize current efforts and provide a road map for ongoing and new efforts in the SSW around diversity, equity, and inclusion. The **goal** is to have a strategic plan that can be discussed by our SSW community and stakeholders on an ongoing basis, so that we can coordinate short- and long-term efforts to ensure that each member of our community can contribute ideas and actions to meet our current and future diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. By having a strategic plan, we can also hold ourselves accountable to making change and assessing the outcomes.

The attached draft is intended as one of many working drafts that will be shared and revised through feedback from various stakeholders. The aim is to have a finalized version that will be shared widely and will guide the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work's diversity, equity, and inclusion action beginning in the fall 2020 academic year. A faculty and staff retreat is planned for August 2020 to begin developing implementation plans as the next step.

Strategic Plan Priority Goals

Given the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) in the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work, as assessed through various modes of data collection and feedback from students, staff, faculty, and other stakeholders over recent years, the following are three DE&I priority goals for the School, focusing on diversity, inclusion, and leadership.

Goal 1: Increase the diversity of our students, staff, faculty, and other governing bodies.

Justification: The Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work strives to promote diversity in race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, income, marital status, class, political beliefs, religion, immigration, and mental and physical ability. We aim to recognize and celebrate the importance of individuals' intersecting identities. Having a diverse student body is important to training the next generation of social workers who will be able to address complicated social problems because of their ability to anticipate, value, and integrate multiple perspectives in their work. Having a diverse student body is critical to forming such knowledge, perspective, and skill. Having a diverse staff, faculty, and other governing bodies is similarly important to encouraging dynamic, critical discourse and learning in our school community, and additionally provides role models for our students from underrepresented groups.

Goal 2: Improve a sense of inclusion for our students, staff, and faculty.

Justification: We aim to create a school community where every person feels welcome, valued, heard, and well equipped to work to overcome historical injustices as part of their personal and professional development. While we aspire to have a diverse SSW community, diversity in itself does not ensure equity and inclusion. As such, we aim to provide an environment that promotes optimal learning, support, and growth for all our students, staff, and faculty, particularly those who hold identities that are typically marginalized in our society.

Goal 3: Equip our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and social work community partners to be social justice leaders who can address diversity, equity, and inclusion in their lives and careers.

Justification: We seek to enhance human well-being and promote human rights as well as social, economic, and environmental justice to achieve an equitable, healthy, and productive society. We must constantly work to affirm our values of social justice, cultural humility, and anti-oppressive practice by continuing to produce and incorporate the newest knowledge, perspectives, and skills to do so. This means updating the knowledge, perspectives, and skills of not only our students, but also our staff, faculty, and community partners. Students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community partners of the SSW should be equipped, supported, and motivated to be social justice leaders on our campus and in our communities.