

Swarthmore College Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Committee Report

Introduction

Strategic Directions calls for Swarthmore College to develop a “diversity, inclusivity, and engagement project that will transform the College into a model workplace and residential learning community in an increasingly complex global world.” The ultimate goal is to build a community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni that is thoroughly diverse, engaged, and inclusive. We live in a world that requires interaction with cultures vastly different from our own. We strive to provide community members with the skills they need to lead diverse communities so that our graduates are prepared to embark on a wide variety of careers united by a deep commitment to create inclusive environments wherever they may be.

The Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Committee was charged with the related tasks of (1) assessing the College’s current status in relation to diversity and inclusion and (2) making preliminary recommendations to assist the College in further cultivating a diverse and inclusive living and learning environment.

Our striving to become a more diverse and inclusive community is firmly rooted in Swarthmore College’s long-standing core values, values that call for full respect of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religious perspective, political conviction, gender, or sexual orientation. These same values invite us at times to advocate on behalf of those who have been—and still are—targets of discrimination in any form.

Beyond moral considerations, our striving for diversity and inclusivity is necessary because diversity enhances our educational and workplace experience dramatically. Decades worth of research confirm that people learn more when surrounded by those whose backgrounds are different from their own; we sharpen our critical-thinking skills, are more intellectually engaged and motivated, and are significantly more satisfied with our experience overall. In light of these insights, diversity is not a problem to be solved but rather an opportunity to be pursued, seized, and celebrated. This happens only to the extent that our diversity is accompanied by inclusion, defined in terms of an environment in which all people are valued. We affirm the statement recently released by the board of directors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities asserting that “without inclusion, there is no true excellence.”

The flourishing of a diverse and inclusive community does not come easily. Our progress toward what Martin Luther King Jr. called a “beloved community” is sometimes wrought with tension, accompanied by risks, and slowed by complexity and misunderstanding. We affirm, with gratitude, the good and important work that has been done over the years at Swarthmore to further diversity and inclusivity, particularly in terms of the diversity of our student body. This work, while providing a foundation on which to build, presents particular challenges in terms of how we support a range of individuals from diverse backgrounds. It also presents opportunities to enhance the experiences of all members of the College community. The fact that there are no simple solutions ought not to deter us, for our growth as individuals and as a community is rooted not only in policies but in a process, one that requires us to seek to understand others more completely—not only for our own good but for the good of all. Our community’s full commitment to this process yields great power.

Overview of the Committee’s Activities

The committee’s work over the last year included a review of relevant data provided by

institutional research that analyses the demographics of students, faculty, and staff; student satisfaction and learning outcomes; and recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. The committee consulted a summary report prepared by Dean Liz Braun: “Diversity and Inclusion at Swarthmore College: A Report of Key Themes and Questions to the Implementation Committee.” The committee met with Mount Holyoke College’s Dr. Becky Packard, who in February, presented to Swarthmore faculty suggestions for ways in which to support students of color and first-generation students through mentoring, advising, and pedagogical practices.

The committee also met with Provost Tom Stephenson to capture information on current initiatives to increase the recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty. It received a presentation from committee member Sharmaine LaMar, assistant vice president for risk management and legal affairs and director of equal opportunity, who described the work she has done with faculty and staff search committees related to issues of diversity and recruitment. The committee has also incorporated into this report concerns and perspectives that emerged in one or more of the gatherings that took place this spring year in response to issues raised by Swarthmore students. Several committee members participated in these gatherings.

The committee met as a large group, but also in subcommittees that focused on one of three key areas: assessment and accountability; faculty and staff recruitment, hiring, and retention; and community engagement. Each subcommittee sought to develop responses to four basic questions: (1) What are our goals/how do we define success? (2) What programs, policies, and initiatives are working well? (3) What new ideas or initiatives should we focus on? and (4) What opportunities can we capitalize on in order to create a more diverse and inclusive institution?

Accountability and Assessment

The committee recognizes that the work our community undertakes must be seen as constant and continual, as evolving but never-ending. We recognize further that the goals toward which our community is striving cannot be attained simply through rules, policies, or initiatives, however well considered. Rather, we achieve our goals when individuals recognize the extent to which their minds and hearts have been enriched and expanded as a result of living in a community that has made diversity and inclusion a top priority. With this understanding in mind, programs and initiatives become gateways to new understanding. The success of these gateways requires thorough structures for assessment and accountability.

Strategic Objective: Articulate clear lines of accountability for new programs and initiatives and for assessing both new and existing programs and initiatives.

Initiatives:

- Once the final report is adopted, the president will charge senior staff members with beginning the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report, and the president and other key leaders—including but not limited to the provost; associate provosts; vice president for human resources; dean of students; associate dean for diversity, inclusion, and community development; and the director of the Equal Opportunity Office—will provide an annual report to the community that tracks progress, including relevant statistics, and outlines plans for the next year.
- The College will incorporate assessment for diversity and inclusion initiatives into existing assessment practices with a special focus on recruitment and hiring practices; training for resident advisers (RAs) and student academic mentors (SAMs); and all peer academic support programs.

- The Dean’s Office, the Provost’s Office and Human Resources will initiate and oversee a thorough “campus climate” study—beginning with focus groups—to capture the attitudes, feelings, and perceptions of individuals about the campus community—not just the individual experience but also the quality and extent of interactions and relationships between and among various groups and individuals across campus. We want to come to a more complete understanding of where our community stands on these issues so we have a firmer sense of where we need to go. This study will include quantitative and qualitative elements. Both the process and the findings will be shared with the community and will inform the direction of future initiatives.
- All new initiatives will include a provision for ongoing assessment in order to monitor success in achieving stated goals. This plan should clearly delineate lines of administrative and faculty responsibility and accountability.
- The College will leverage key opportunities such as the Middle States review and self-assessments to determine progress in the area of diversity and inclusion.
- All supervisors and staff will be required to set diversity-related competency goals to be included in annual performance reviews; supervisors and staff will be evaluated, in part, based on their ability to achieve these goals.
- Each department and office will be required to include in its end-of-the-year report a discussion of how it contributed to the goal of creating a diverse and inclusive learning environment.
- In order to support the recommendations offered, representatives from the Dean’s Office, the Provost’s Office, Human Resources, and the Equal Opportunity Office will meet regularly and consult regularly with Student Council, Administrative Advisory Council, Staff Advisory Council, and the appropriate faculty committee.

Faculty and Staff Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention

During the strategic planning process, many community members voiced a desire that the College’s faculty and staff reflect more closely the country’s diversity, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality, religion, and political ideology. Based on feedback from the community and public dialogue around hiring and retention, we have focused on domestic faculty and staff members of color. We recognize that the College has already taken steps in this direction. For example, the equal opportunity director and a representative from Human Resources have begun to meet with search committees (for staff searches), and the equal opportunity director and a member of the Provost’s Office meet with faculty search committees to ensure that diversity needs and goals are considered and that search criteria are free of bias.

Strategic Objective:

The College will develop a comprehensive approach to the recruitment, hiring, and retention of faculty and staff in support of the goal of cultivating a faculty and staff members that more closely reflects our country’s diversity.

Faculty Recruitment and Hiring Initiatives:

- The provost, in consultation with Committee on Faculty Procedures, will appoint an ad hoc faculty committee to develop a comprehensive set of guidelines for faculty search procedures that demonstrate best practices for achieving greater diversity. This committee should review and incorporate best practices from peer institutions.¹ These guidelines should be developed in collaboration with the Equal Opportunity Office and presented to faculty for approval.
- Beginning in 2013–2014, all faculty searches will use online applications with mandatory collection of equal opportunity data. This data will greatly assist the College in assessing whether its search techniques are reaching a diverse pool of qualified candidates in each search.
- Faculty will be more proactive in identifying potential candidates before positions become available. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including by building networks with feeder schools at which people from diverse backgrounds regularly earn PhDs in relevant disciplines and making full use of all available funds to network with professional associations, using specific listservs and working with organizations that serve as affinity groups for underrepresented faculty candidates.
- Continue and perhaps expand the hiring of postdocs through the Consortium on Faculty Diversity (CFD). (Several who participated in CFD’s postdoc program were later hired for tenure-track positions.)
- Bring more persons from underrepresented groups to the College as guest lecturers, speakers, and presenters, keeping in mind that each such person is a potential candidate for open positions. All major lecture or event-planning committees (administrative, faculty, or student led) should consider how their selected speakers/performers will contribute to a diverse and inclusive campus environment.
- Create a document that describes the benefits of Swarthmore as a workplace from the perspective of faculty. This could be distributed by faculty to potential candidates in such venues as conferences and annual meetings of national associations where candidates from underrepresented groups are likely to be present.
- Highlight and expand the diversity and inclusion page on the College website. This page provides information about the College’s goals and relevant events as well as information that would be useful to candidates who could enhance the College’s diversity.

¹ When departments at Mount Holyoke submit requests for new faculty positions, they must include a recruitment plan that focuses on how the department will attract a diverse applicant pool and a mentoring plan to support new hires. When positions are approved, each search committee meets to learn about best practices. The College has a faculty search oversight committee charged with approving the applicant pool. If the search committee is not fulfilling its recruitment plan, the oversight committee can require a department to broaden the pool or re-establish its plan. The provost must approve the shortlist of candidates to be interviewed.

Guidelines governing faculty search procedures at MIT are annotated to highlight practices that support diversity and equity in hiring. MIT’s associate dean meets one-on-one with the chair of every search committee to review these procedures as well as other factors that can improve the diversity of the applicant pool. MIT also has a Faculty Search Oversight Committee, chaired by the associate dean, which reviews the process and the shortlists for every search and makes recommendations.

- With the goal of more thoroughly assessing the success of diversity recruitment efforts, build a more complete database (largely via online applications) to determine more accurately (a) the number and demographics of doctoral degree recipients nationwide and (b) who is applying to positions at Swarthmore.
- The associate provost for faculty development should provide structured opportunities for faculty and staff members to think about and discuss what diversity means to them and to their work or discipline, especially as it relates to hiring and retaining persons of color. The provost should ensure that search committees use a broad definition of “good fit” in order to attract candidates outside the traditional networks.

Faculty and Staff Retention Initiatives:

- Provide structured opportunities for all faculty to learn, from one another best practices for mentoring, developing, and retaining all junior faculty. Develop, under the auspices of the Provost’s Office, a mentoring program for all associate professors that includes creating a plan for promotion.
- Expand the new staff orientation program to ensure that new employees will uphold Swarthmore’s community values and goals as they relate to diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Explore opportunities and potential programs—such as formal and informal mentoring programs, professional development opportunities, affinity groups, and gatherings based on shared interests—that support the retention of faculty and staff from underrepresented groups.

Community Engagement

The Community Engagement subcommittee considered students, faculty, and staff, as individual groups and collectively, i.e., as one community. We began by envisioning a campus environment wherein everyone feels recognized, welcomed, and respected in the classroom and in all other venues.

As a small, residential liberal arts college, we have an opportunity few others have to explore and work through the complexities of living in an intentionally diverse and inclusive community, to arrive at a deeper understanding of the world around us, and to experience the genuine sense of joy that springs from authentic relationships with people from many different backgrounds who are united in purpose.

We discussed goals that further our philosophy of “inclusive excellence,” which, among other things, calls for students to receive analytic tools in order to understand and interpret their lived experiences and to navigate any inherent discomfort in courses where their lived experience is the actual focus of study.

An environment that celebrates “inclusive excellence” recognizes and supports all members of the community, ensuring that all feel welcomed in any setting and that there is equal access to the opportunities and resources the College provides. The committee affirms existing activities designed to support this type of environment, including the Intercultural Center/Black Cultural Center retreat, the women’s lunches hosted by the Women’s Resource Center each semester,

events and outreach programs offered by the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility, and the many other efforts over the years.

Strategic Objective: Cultivate a campus environment in which everyone feels recognized, welcomed, and respected in the classroom and in all other venues.

Initiatives:

- The College will provide ongoing structured activities designed to enable students, faculty, and staff to gain a deeper understanding of themselves; to connect with others across lines of difference; to empathize with one another; to increase awareness of how words and actions are perceived; and to gain the analytic tools and skills needed to live in a diverse, inclusive, and intentional community.
- A committee will be appointed this fall to investigate the possibility of instituting a range of curricular initiatives. The Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Committee discussed several ideas for further exploration, including but not limited to: 1) A series of required courses focused on living in an intentional community. Similar to the physical education requirement, several of these courses would be required for graduation (though they would not be for academic credit.) 2) Courses such as Intergroup Dialogue that would not be mandatory but would be taken for credit. 3) The creation of a designation like the W (writing courses) for particular courses that directly link to the cultivation of a diverse and inclusive learning environment.
- Identify or create opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to find community both through affinity groups and coalitions with shared goals and as part of the larger community.
- Identify activities/programs/initiatives, such as Intergroup Dialogue, that are designed to encourage in difficult conversations and discussion of uncomfortable issues wherever they arise (classroom, residence hall, student organizations, etc.) with civility and respect. This includes developing greater sensitivity to micro-aggressions (daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile or derogatory slights and insults toward members of marginalized groups) and creating opportunities to address intragroup conflicts.²
- Encourage the organizers and leaders of various entities—in the course of their regular activities and through intergroup conversations—to consider innovative ways to contribute to the building of a more diverse and inclusive community. Options include programming, educational sessions, and intergroup (and interdepartment) collaborations designed to build cultural competence and facilitate dialogue. Spaces where this can occur include New Student Orientation; Faculty Lunches; advisors meetings; Staff Development Week; departmental retreats; performance reviews; residence halls; the Black Cultural Center; the Intercultural Center; the Women’s Resource Center; athletics; the Leadership Forum; the Staff Advisory Council (SAC); the Administrative Advisory Council (AAC); All-Staff Meetings; and Faculty Meetings.
- Expand opportunities for community education and/or social engagement to promote

² One example is the Discrimination Advisors program at Kenyon College that hires and trains students to whom acts of discrimination can be reported.

student, faculty, and staff interactions and dialogue. Examples include regularly scheduled lunchtime discussions, teach-ins, book groups, barbecues, Collections, community dinners (three to four per semester), and expert speakers.

- Develop sustained training for faculty and staff on topics related to diversity and creating an inclusive environment. This training would address topics such as understanding power and privilege, what it means to be a mentor and an ally, and sharing our own stories.³ This training, which should be open to all community members, could be linked to new faculty and staff orientation or folded into existing gatherings and meetings.
- Encourage all departments, organizations, and student groups to reflect carefully on how the speakers they invite and the programs they plan contribute to a diverse and inclusive campus environment. This includes those charged with planning events associated with next year's sesquicentennial celebration.
- Expand and enhance diversity and inclusion training for key student leadership positions such as RAs, SAMs, campus advisers and Student Council, as well as for athletes. Related to this, consider a student's commitment to supporting and cultivating a diverse and inclusive community as part of the application and selection process for these leadership positions.
- Enhance new student orientation and residential experience for all students in ways that support the building of a diverse and inclusive community. This includes clearly addressing community expectations as well as developing sustained programming that reinforces these expectations, in part by helping students develop the ability to listen deeply, to engage in dialogue across lines of difference, and to work through conflicts.
- Provide as needed or desired specific support and advocacy for underrepresented groups on campus.⁴

Curriculum and Pedagogy

The committee also focused on issues related to curriculum and pedagogy, with the understanding that not only does the academic experience lie at the heart of our mission but it also plays a critical role in cultivating a diverse and inclusive learning environment.

Strategic Objective: Foster pedagogy and academic supports that allow all students to develop their intellectual capacities to their fullest potential. Support a curriculum that continually evolves to reflect the diversity in our world and to include new modes of intellectual engagement and rigor.

Initiatives:

- Students come to Swarthmore with different preparations for their academic experiences in part because of the inequities inherent in the primary and secondary school education

³ Dr. Becky Packard from Mount Holyoke College discussed a program called Sticky Situations in which faculty and/or staff are presented with case studies based on real situations on campus. The group is asked to discuss how they would respond. They also share best practices and advice.

⁴ Hamilton College recently initiated a program called First Year Forward, which offers summer internship funding, individualized career counseling, and programming related to career exploration for first-generation students.

across the globe and especially in this country. We will continue to examine and assess how best to provide academic support to all of our students. With this in mind, we encourage the curriculum committee, in consultation with individual departments, to develop a plan to assess current programs for academic support and success, particularly in the sciences. If these programs are not meeting student needs, the community should consider other options. Some institutions have found summer bridge programs to be effective, and these should be studied for possible implementation at Swarthmore.

- Faculty chairs will encourage their departments to continue to critically assess the diversity represented both in course offerings and in course content. We recommend that the Provost's Office establish a fund for curricular innovation grants to support faculty in developing new courses or revamping existing courses to increase the diversity of perspectives.
- Encourage students who have requested the addition of an ethnic studies department and/or a Latina/o studies and Asian-American studies department (as well as for increased institutional support for programs such as gender and sexuality studies, black studies, and environmental studies) to work with interested faculty to develop formal requests. The provost is also a resource for those interested in learning more about the process.
- The Provost's Office will establish a faculty working group to create a curricular map that will help students navigate interdisciplinary programs and departments and identify courses that relate to issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality across divisions and departments.
- Provide faculty with regular opportunities (through such events as workshops and seminars) to exchange ideas with one another regarding best practices related to pedagogy and to consider opportunities to increase problem-based learning (related to diversity) in their courses.

Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Committee 2012-2013

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