

Student Conduct & Community Standards Departmental Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan

July 17, 2017



Introduction

The Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards, which has traditionally been part of the Office of Student Life at Brown, is now a stand-alone office within the Division of Campus Life and Student Services. It is charged with processing and adjudicating alleged violations of the Code of Student Conduct, with the exception of Title IX cases, and with providing support to students as they navigate often difficult and contentious situations. Our mission statement embodies our charge and our philosophy of education and growth:

The Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards at Brown University is committed to working within an educational framework to address potential violations of our community standards. We aim to be fair and transparent and work with integrity to serve individual students as well as the campus community. We approach our work as an investment in students' learning and character development in order to prepare and educate them to discharge the offices of life with usefulness and reputation.

It is imperative that the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards develop and maintain a commitment to equity in all aspects of our work. We aim to make our processes and individual interactions equitable for all students, regardless of the identities and relative privileges they hold. Much of our work is dependent on the reports and requests we receive from other entities, determining to a large extent which students interact with our office. Creating an equitable experience within these parameters involves being mindful of how the implicit biases and lived experiences of community members shape their interactions and ensuring that our staff and hearing officers have the necessary empathic skills and cultural competence to respond appropriately. It also involves a commitment to fair and consistent responses to external pressures from media and alumni that sometimes accompany high-profile incidents. Finally, promoting equity involves community outreach and education to ensure that students who have been harmed by the behaviors of others know how our office can help them seek a remedy and gain access to necessary resources.

With this commitment to equity in mind, we have looked closely at four major areas of our work to assess how we can improve what we do in light of the diversity of our campus community. While all forms of diversity are important to support and celebrate, we have placed a particular focus in this report on Historically Underrepresented Groups and how we serve their needs and interests within our processes. The four areas we looked at include (1) the diversity and cultural competence of our staff, (2) the diversity and cultural competence of those serving in different roles within our processes, (3) the diversity of different groups referred to us as respondents, and (4) the diversity of those who seek our services as complainants and the knowledge of our process within different communities.

Staff Representation and Cultural Proficiency

This year the Office of Student Life is going through some structural changes, which gives us an opportunity to focus on the compositional diversity of our office. We will no longer have an administrative assistant supporting the office and we will be adding another Assistant Dean to the team. This will leave the office with three deans (one Associate Dean/Director and two Assistant Deans) and one Coordinator.

Currently there are three incumbent staff members on our team - one female-identifying Latinx and two female-identifying White staff members. Our vision is to make advancement an integral part of our staffing model, not only to encourage a diversity of qualified candidates to apply for our positions, but also to retain/promote them within the University.

We have structured our staffing to include (1) the Associate Dean/Director, (2) an Assistant Dean hired with a minimum of 5 years' experience who could at some point be promoted to an Associate Dean, (3) an Assistant Dean with 3-5 years of experience who could be promoted by grade to fill the position of Assistant Dean with a minimum of 5 years' experience, and (4) a Coordinator with a Master's Degree in a relevant field who could be promoted to an Assistant Dean position with 3-5 years of experience. This gives us the flexibility to incorporate professional vertical growth within the department.

As we have an open position for a Coordinator, we will be working to advertise broadly in an effort to attract applications from a diverse range of candidates. Our primary focus, however, will be on highly qualified Historically Underrepresented Groups as per the guidance of the university DIAP.

Looking at the representation of our staff is only a first step. With our office having only four staff members, it is also important to focus on hiring staff invested in social justice and in growing their knowledge and skills in cultural competence/proficiency.

IN PROGRESS

1. Working to creating pathways for advancement within the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards to make the positions more attractive to a diverse applicant pool and to support and reward hard work and competency.
2. We will be hiring a new Coordinator and will be creating a job description and advertising with the goal of attracting a diverse set of qualified applicants with experience in student conduct and in social justice initiatives.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Schedule conversations two times in the 2017 - 2018 academic year around issues of diversity and inclusion as a staff. We will select a reading or a case to look at through different lenses and discuss how we perform our work in the context of our diverse community.
2. Each staff member will participate in at least two events in the 2017 - 2018 academic year outside our office on a topic related to diversity and inclusion.

UPDATES

1. Since this document was first drafted we have already completed the goals which were in progress. The incumbent Student Conduct Coordinator was promoted to an Assistant Dean position and we were able to hire a new highly qualified coordinator with experience in student conduct and social justice. Our new coordinator brings

with them a wealth of experience and adds to the compositional diversity and knowledge diversity of our office.

Diversity and Cultural Proficiency of Hearing Officers and Advisors

Within our process we strive to be equitable and fair in how cases are handled. Lower level hearings are held by a variety of staff members within the Division of Campus Life, the Graduate School, and the Medical School. Higher level hearings incorporate a broader range of hearing officers. In addition to those above, they include faculty, staff from the Office of the Dean of the College, and students. We also have volunteer staff and faculty who serve as advisors to students going through the conduct process and as representatives of the University in the absence of an individual complainant.

Currently we have very few participants of color within our process at this level. Four out of 14 advisors are faculty/staff of color; 9 out of 22 staff, 2 out of 4 faculty, and 5 out of 16 students serving on the Student Conduct Board are people of color; and 1 out of 5 Administrative Hearing Officers is a person of color.

There are certain positions which are assigned to hear cases at the lower level hearing. We do not control the recruitment of these positions in any way. For higher level hearings the hearing officers are selected by the Faculty Nominating Committee (faculty), the Dean of the College and the Vice President for Campus Life and Student Services (deans), and the Undergraduate Council of Students, Graduate Student Council, and the Medical Student Senate (students). Advisors are recruited by our office and staff and faculty serve as advisors in a volunteer capacity.

In order to improve diversity of those serving within the process, we need to look at how members are recruited and make a concerted effort to improve diversity within our pool. However, we are limited by availability of diverse staff and faculty at Brown. Given the current representation of Black, Latinx, and Asian staff and faculty, this affects our ability to recruit from these populations. Therefore, we also need to look at our training to ensure cultural proficiency of board members and advisors. We currently provide some training

on cultural awareness during hearings but can do more to target specific issues of cultural importance with our hearing officers and advisors.

IN PROGRESS

1. We have a staff member who will be trained in Restorative Justice in January of 2017 so that we can incorporate some of the tenets of Restorative Justice into our work. Restorative Justice centers the voice and experience of the harmed party, allowing them an opportunity to heal by processing, understanding, and articulating their experience and their needs. This process helps individuals take active responsibility for harm they have caused and provides an opportunity for them to understand the impact of their actions on others and begin repairing the harm caused by their actions.
2. We will conduct trainings of others in Restorative Justice Practices and use the tools learned in this practice to enhance our work and improve our work across different segments of our community.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Review processes for recruitment and assess if improvements can be made in the recruitment and selection of those who serve as hearing officers or advisors within our process.
2. Review training and materials for all hearing officers and advisors and increase information shared around cultural proficiency.

UPDATES

1. Since the writing of this document, one of our deans has attended a restorative justice training and begun meeting with campus partners to discuss opportunities to train and involve others in this initiative.

Referrals to Student Conduct

The third way in which equity may be affected is in who is coming to our attention. Students come to our attention through a variety of channels, including referral from other departments (Department of Public Safety, Student Activities, Residential Life, Dining Services, etc.), from other students, and from outside members of the community (neighbors, other institutions, etc.).

In December of 2015, we conducted an assessment of cases referred to our office from the Department of Public Safety. We found that students who identified themselves with two or more racial categories in Banner or those who did not identify their race represented a higher percentage of respondents than of the general student population. We did not find this to be true with other populations such as the Black and Latinx populations. Inconsistent self-identification in Banner makes it difficult to capture whether the figures represented in these reports are an accurate reflection of the makeup of our respondent population.

The rate of reporting for certain populations, such as students who identify with 2 or more races/ethnicities, will need to have continued assessment. We must look at how we can best work to alleviate the impact of any implicit bias in reporting so as to ensure equity within our process. We must also find ways to share information regarding our findings without compromising the privacy of students, especially those who are members of small communities at Brown.

ACTION ITEMS

1. We will continue to monitor race and gender of respondents in cases referred to us by others, including the Department of Public Safety, Student Activities, Residential Life, Dining Services, and student complainants. We will generate yearly reports of these statistics.
2. We will work to assess how to best share the data with these departments as well as with the community as a whole so as not to compromise confidentiality.

Student Awareness of Our Process

A few of our cases come to us directly from students affected by another student's behavior. In thinking about fairness and equity within our process, it is important to acknowledge that there may be differences in how students from different communities view our office and make use of our services. Additionally, there are many students who may not be aware of our community standards or how our office might address violations of those standards. We have yet to compile data in this area and need to look at how to best assess our accessibility to those of different backgrounds.

IN PROGRESS

1. We are in the process of building up a peer group of students, the Student Conduct & Community Standards Ambassadors, to work on community engagement around issues of our standards and our process. We are in the beginning stages and will be piloting the program during the 2017-2018 academic year.
2. We will work to assess how to best collect the data needed in this area, both regarding use of our services and knowledge of our process. We will then assess how to best share the data with the community as a whole.

Process for Developing DDIAP

In preparation for developing this action plan, we felt it was important to gather data from a number of sources so we would have a realistic sense of who we are serving, a reference point against which to compare future progress, and a qualitative assessment of the student experience of interacting with our office. We utilized quantitative data from our Maxient database to gather demographic information about the students who have gone through our processes. As stated before, it is difficult to draw too fine of conclusions about this as a result of possible inconsistencies (and known abstentions) in students' self-identifications. However, this gave a broad perspective that serves as a reasonable starting point. In addition to collecting demographic information, we reviewed the survey responses we have collected from students who have been respondents in Dean's Hearings.

These surveys pointed to areas that indicate further training with our hearing officers would be useful and also underscored the importance of adding questions that directly assess hearing officers' perceived cultural competence. With these data in mind, the staff in the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards developed a series of questions to ask a focus group comprised of student members of the Student Conduct Board. That focus group was conducted during a training session and yielded valuable insights about students' perspectives about our office. It also led to several ideas for recruiting a more diverse pool of students to serve on the Student Conduct Board and for the Student Conduct & Community Standards Student Ambassadors to address in their outreach efforts to different communities on campus. Our office is excited about the direction these efforts provided and about the plan we have developed to address these and other issues related to diversity and inclusion in the work we do.