



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

**Laboratory
Schools**

DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

It is the aim of progressive education to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them.

—Lab founder John Dewey

The democratic faith in human equality is belief that every human being, independent of the quantity or range of his personal endowment, has the right to equal opportunity with every other person for development of whatever gifts he has.

—Lab founder John Dewey

BACKGROUND

The University of Chicago's Diversity & Inclusion Initiative encourages each unit of the University to create, improve, and implement their own D&I plan¹. At the heart of this plan is a key action item identified in the 2019 Strategic Framework:

Lab is committed to strengthening efforts to build and support a diverse student body, faculty, and staff, knowing this is a hallmark of educational excellence.

This action plan was written with the Diversity Advisory Committee, drawing upon the University of Chicago's approach to diversity and inclusion as well as best practices from the field, including the National Association of Independent Schools' principles of good practice. This plan takes its structure from the University of Chicago. Our action steps seek to align with the larger University vision while addressing the unique needs of a school serving children ages three through 18. We look forward to collaborating with other units of the University as they finalize their own plans.

¹ bit.ly/UCtoolkit

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1942, governed by the principle of equality, as demonstrated by its then long-standing history of enrolling Asian and Jewish students, the Laboratory Schools took action, as a result of parent activism, to become the first independent school in Chicago to admit African American students. As a result of the early and ongoing attention to diversity, the Laboratory Schools are endowed with an extended family of diverse alumni who have entered and influenced all walks of life.

Lab founder John Dewey served as president of the organization that gave birth to what is now the Progressive Education Network (PEN). As part of Lab's 2019 Strategic Framework, the Schools embraced PEN's definitions of progressive education, among those:

- Schools nurture citizens in an increasingly diverse democracy
- Progressive education in the twenty-first century promotes diversity, equity, and justice in our schools and society
- Education must amplify student voice, agency, conscience, and intellect to create a more equitable, just, and sustainable world

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 2007, the Lab Board established a Diversity Task Force to address issues of diversity and inclusion at Lab. The charge of the task force was to develop and offer a set of recommendations to reach the goal of increased diversity and inclusion. One recommendation was to establish an Advisory Committee with broad representation from throughout the Laboratory Schools community. In 2012, the DAC was created to provide informal leadership for ongoing diversity and inclusion work.

The Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC)—made up of faculty, staff, administrators, parents, students, and board members—spent the 2018–2019 school year drafting a three-year action plan. The DAC referenced historical documents including the PA DEI Committee’s recommendations to the school (Appendix 4). The goal of this plan is to help Lab strategically guide actions, decisions, programs, and funding over the course of the next three school years. In the fall of 2019, this plan was reviewed and revised to be aligned with the 2019 Strategic Framework and the University’s newly launched website on diversity and inclusion.

This plan is intended to cover the next three academic years, starting in the fall of 2020. During the 2022–2023 school year, we will revisit this plan, review our progress, and determine what actions and course-corrections may be needed allowing Lab to meet its objectives and fulfill its mission. This work will also be coordinated with our accreditation process and demands of the accrediting body.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This graphic depicts the four areas of the plan. The sections, which mirror some of the sections of the University's plan, address inclusive teaching (teaching and learning), diversifying our community (people), and sense of belonging (climate and community). This is underpinned by the infrastructure section, which addresses the resources needed to sustain our diversity efforts.

**TEACHING
AND
LEARNING**

PEOPLE

**CLIMATE
AND
COMMUNITY**

INFRASTRUCTURE

INFRASTRUCTURE

Create the conditions and resources needed for sustained diversity efforts at Lab.

Revise and refine Lab's diversity statement² to clarify alignment with the University and to improve the statement's functionality as a guiding tool for our community

- Collaborate with the University's Diversity and Inclusion offices
- Determine how to better leverage University resources to advance Lab's diversity work
- Clarify where and how N-12 practices should be consistent with and/or different from the University's to meet students' developmental needs

Establish measurable goals to guide Lab and create a data dashboard that helps Lab assess progress and identify areas of focus³.

- Analyze data that looks at program access and outcomes
 - » Determine what measurements, possibly by division/department, best indicate access and inclusion
 - » Collect and examine academic achievement data (grades, ERBs, other measures) consistent with NAIS best practices
 - » Continue to report Health and Wellness survey data for longitudinal analysis

² www.ucls.uchicago.edu/about-lab/diversity-statement

³ Collaborate with the University to clarify what data can and will be shared with which constituent groups.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Examine data that looks at hiring and retention of a diverse employee population
 - » Collect demographic information about new hires
 - » Use hiring and retention data to inform hiring practices and partnership with the mentoring program
- Continue to share longitudinal demographic and admissions data annually with employees, the Parents' Association DEI Committee, students, and the Board
 - » Seek input from Board, University, parents, employees and students regarding additional data needs

Revise policies and practices across the Schools to ensure consistency and eliminate gaps

- Update handbook policies on hate speech and language
- Explore an “ability audit” of the school
- Ensure gender identification on signage/forms/documents is consistent across Lab
- Clarify when and how communications are written about tragic local, national, and global events
- Revisit student dress code policies for equity and inclusion
- Explore how to incorporate more restorative practices into our discipline policies
- Increase transparency around academic tracking and class placement

Share up-to-date diversity resources with the community

- Leverage website to celebrate and recognize employees, students, and alumni of diverse backgrounds and experiences, highlight Lab's diversity work, etc.
- Publish monthly newsletters for the community and link the content to the website

Ensure adequate financial and human resources to support programs

- Benchmark against peer schools' scope, staffing, and funding levels relative to their student bodies
- Evaluate and refine the role of the DEI Coordinators
- Assess staffing needs to support our diversity and inclusion goals
- Review and refine the structure, membership, and purpose of the Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) and revise, as needed, how representatives are chosen and replaced

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Create opportunities for employees and students to develop their skills, through intentional teaching and learning practices, that will help our students develop a respect for difference, have voice, and prepare them to contribute as members of a complex world in college or beyond.

Inventory where/how/when diversity, equity, and inclusion concepts are currently taught

- Clarify what we teach and how we teach, with an understanding of both the visible and invisible curriculum
- Explore where and when students have opportunities to develop their skills in navigating controversial topics
- Include diversity topics/experiences in the portrait(s) of a Lab graduate

Establish a toolkit for Lab school employees to ensure a base level of understanding and shared language of diversity concepts

- Include PD opportunities that allow Lab employees to teach all students effectively, communicate across lines of difference, and engage in difficult conversations
- Create intentional professional development activities that connect directly to classroom teaching and learning practices

Recognize the breadth of neurodiversity across the Lab student body, and ensure that Lab is meeting student needs through differentiated teaching practices

- Provide increased opportunities to have all employees practice inclusive pedagogy

Continue to emphasize frameworks, such as the Teaching Tolerance K-12 Framework⁴, as resources to inform Lab's teaching practice and parent education

- Support the continued work at ESH around creating the articulation of an N-2 identity curriculum that addresses diversity within Lab and the broader community
- Offer workshops to explore connections between Teaching Tolerance framework and current teaching practices
- Explore ways that questions of diversity, equity, and inclusion connect to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Lab's teacher evaluation process

⁴ bit.ly/toleranceorg

Advance knowledge and skills around inclusive pedagogy, windows and mirrors in content, and culturally responsive teaching for all employees

- Require regular, ongoing, domain-specific professional development for faculty and staff to deepen employees' knowledge and skills of diversity, equity, and inclusion topics
- Continue to support teachers by collaborating on curriculum review and development
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with grade levels and/or departments around specific content selection and concepts
- Assess the role of history/heritage month celebrations/acknowledgments in the context of Lab's vision and, as needed, explore a schoolwide, coordinated approach
- Ensure consistency and collaboration of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and trainings across divisions and departments through Lab's office of DEI

PEOPLE

Support the recruitment, development, and retention of a diverse faculty, staff, and student body.

Recruit a diverse employee population (faculty, staff, admin, etc.) that better reflects the demographics and identities of Lab's student body

- Continue to explore and identify barriers to recruitment and hiring and how school practices and policies can help Lab overcome those barriers
- Continue to attend targeted recruitment/hiring fairs
- Explore additional opportunities for recruitment
 - » Historically Black Colleges and Universities careers fairs/listservs
 - » Professional communities of color (NAHJ, NSBE, etc.)

Recruit and enroll a diverse student body⁵

- Understand barriers to enrollment—perceptions, financial barriers, other constraints
 - » Explore creative strategies to diversify the student body
 - » Balance continued outreach to schools (of all ages) across the city with admissions availability
- Raise financial aid resources to expand access, affordability, and inclusion. Establish systems to support and measure progress⁶.
 - » Determine the cost of full participation at Lab and take steps to ensure that financial aid covers full participation

PEOPLE

- » Execute a fundraising campaign that ensures Lab can fully meet the demonstrated financial aid needs of families, taking into account wraparound services, extended day, Summer Lab⁷.
- » Work with Admissions and Alumni Relations and Development to develop strategies so that Lab can meet the demonstrated need of all admitted families.
- » Revisit and refine Lab's financial aid practices in partnership with Admissions
- Translate Admissions materials into languages other than English
- Emphasize commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Admissions process
 - » Share curriculum and programs in the Admissions process so students and families see themselves reflected in the daily life of Lab
 - » Share demographic information with families in the Admissions process

⁵ We will work towards this given the context of our admissions work and the priority system we have in place.

⁶ This action item is also part of the 2019 Strategic Framework

⁷ This action item is also part of the 2019 Strategic Framework

Retain a diverse student body by meeting the needs of students and families

- Provide more training opportunities for our community on how to better support students with physical disabilities
- Refine communications about religious observances and offer continued support to employees and families in navigating these holidays and school commitments
- Measure attrition by demographics and develop plans to address attrition
- Start implementing “stay” interviews for Black and Latinx families and other underrepresented groups
- Continue growth of affinity groups for students and families from N3-12

Retain a diverse employee population

- Continue to support professional development opportunities that serve as learning opportunities and help retention (e.g. NAIS People of Color Conference)
- Consider how to collaborate and partner with union mentoring program
- Increase opportunities for formal and informal leadership for employees of color and other marginalized groups.
- Use exit interview data to create a proactive hiring and retention plan
- Start implementing “stay” interviews for employees we actively want to retain
- Continue growth of affinity groups for employees

CLIMATE & COMMUNITY

Build a culture of full participation and high engagement for all members of our community. Ensure a sense of belonging and connection to Chicago for all members of our community.

Explore implementing a longitudinal climate survey (once every 2–3 years) to measure sense of belonging and inclusion among both employees and students

Offer a menu of professional development opportunities throughout the year to both cultivate a healthy and inclusive school environment and inform educational program

- Circulate a list of summer and school year off-site training
- Offer at least six optional PD opportunities throughout the year (book discussions, film screenings, workshops, speakers, SEED, etc.)
- Determine themes/focus areas for PD for each school year
- Continue to lead trainings for Lab's leadership teams (Senior Leadership and Divisional Administrators) around core diversity topics.
- Leverage University programming where appropriate

Highlight the intersection and connection of diversity, equity, and inclusion work with health and wellness/social emotional learning.

Value Chicago as an asset

- Understand cultural context of our city, including Chicago's history and connect that to Lab's diversity efforts
- Partner with organizations across the city, particularly the Southside, including UChicago Charter Schools

APPENDIX 1:

THE PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION PRINCIPLES

The purpose of school expands beyond prevailing education policy and practice. Progressive educators support their students' deep intellectual development and healthy identity formation—as developing individuals, as active learners within a school community, and as engaged citizens in the broader world.

Education must...

- amplify student voice, agency, conscience, and intellect to create a more equitable, just, and sustainable world.
- encourage the active participation of students in their learning, in their communities, and in the world.
- respond to the developmental needs of students, and focus on their social, emotional, intellectual, cognitive, cultural, and physical development.
- honor and nurture students' natural curiosity and innate desire to learn, fostering internal motivation and the discovery of passion and purpose.
- emerge from the interests, experiences, goals, and needs of diverse constituents, fostering empathy, communication and collaboration across difference.
- foster respectfully collaborative and critical relationships between students, educators, parents/ guardians, and the community.

APPENDIX 2:

THE COLLABORATIVE FOR ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (CASEL) FRAMEWORK

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

CASEL identifies five core competencies:

1. Self-awareness

The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”

2. Self-management

The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

3. Social awareness

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

4. Relationship skills

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

5. Responsible decision-making

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.



APPENDIX 3:

ISACS SELF-STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS (2015)

- In anticipation of an increased financial aid budget, develop a clear statement which outlines the philosophy and purpose of the financial aid program and the students it will serve.
- Work to ensure that the needs and interests of students of color are considered in the development of new or additional programming in the advisory program, understanding that the approaches will vary from one division to another.
- Develop an action plan to ensure that the newly appointed Coordinator of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has sufficient resources and authority to meet the full and expansive needs of the entire community.
- Hold facilitated dialogues about race, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class for all constituents in order to build an inclusive and equitable school community.
- Utilize the full resources of the University and current faculty to develop a strategic plan to train the full faculty and staff in cross cultural competence and inclusion to support the health and well-being of its students.
- Decide whether socioeconomic diversity is a UCLS priority. If so, act accordingly by allocating resources for financial aid.
- Collaboratively develop a comprehensive plan to support student wellness to include stress management, social-emotional health issues, conflict management, and diversity education.
- Plan purposeful professional development on established divisional goals tied to school-wide goals, such as experiential learning, differentiation strategies, and diversity.
- Utilize the new Diversity Coordinator to continue providing professional development as the Nursery/Kindergarten division updates their Program of Study to reflect their diversity work and to support the ongoing age appropriate development of cultural competence.

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