



11 June 2020

Dear Second-Year MScPI Students,

We thank you again for taking the time to contact us to express your concerns. As program faculty we strongly support the ideals that you have put forward. Your demands of us and the program are very constructive. We agree with them, and want to work with you to figure out how to implement them. Below are some preliminary steps we intend to make to do so.

We are sure you have also now read the department's Solidarity Statement Regarding Anti-Black Racism, and there is significant overlap between the demands of planning students and the commitment of the department administration (which includes the Director of Planning) to address institutionalized racism and support students and other BIPOC persons in the department. As both program and department faculty, we look forward to being part of those conversations and implementations in the years ahead.

The Planning Program, however, also has the autonomy and latitude to address some of your demands on its own, and we are fortunate to have such a constructive student body to work with. Over the past week, Katharine and I have been discussing with other Planning Faculty what first steps of action to propose in response to your letter and as part of our curriculum review process targeted for 2020-2021.

Student Demands for Curriculum Reform

- Require anti-Black racism in planning theory and practice be addressed as mandatory course components in the core curriculum of the MSc in Planning program (our current understanding is that inclusion of these materials in syllabi are at the discretion of instructors);
- Ensure that discussion regarding the role of planning in institutionalizing and perpetuating anti-Black racism is not just listed as part of available readings, or as part of a larger 'diversity in planning' module, but discussed explicitly while centring the nuanced historical and contemporary experiences of Black, queer, and disabled women and trans* people in cities (here, we would like to recognize current efforts made by faculty, but we must do so much more);
- Ensure that readings and resources are not only about Black communities, but from them. This includes developing a mechanism that allows students with lived experience and other expertise to contribute to the curriculum.

Response:

We propose making these curricular changes in a multi-part process of a curriculum review already slated for the 2020-2021 AY. We envision a process with robust student participation that explicitly addresses inclusion

and centers anti-Black racism as it pertains to planning, as well as material on NBPOC (Non-Black People of Colour) discrimination, SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression) equality, and equal opportunity for those with different accessibility and mobility needs.

Step 1: Immediate, Summer 2020: Begin organizing Curriculum Review (CR) process and content, and introduce additional anti-racist material to some of our important core courses.

The Planning Director will begin to organize the CR process along with the Planning Committee (all core planning faculty and student representatives), focusing on laying out a timeline and objectives for the academic year. We will have an initial meeting in June as the Directorship transitions from Professor Hess to Professor Rankin. As part of this summer's effort, we will review resources and initiatives from other institutions such as those helpfully identified in your letter.

Professors Hackworth, Spicer and Stephens will collaborate to incorporate additional anti-racist content to PLA1101 (Planning History, Thought and Practice). Professor Spicer will re-examine PLA1105 (Planning Decision Methods 11) to strengthen this content, and Professor Rankin will incorporate content into PLA 1106 (Workshop in Planning Practice).

We will also compile a list of academic and other resources to support other faculty teaching core and elective courses in incorporating anti-racist content. This will include, but not be limited to, the list of resources developed by Bousfield Visiting Scholar Jay Pitter and her students. We will set strong expectations that course instructors engage in this work with careful consideration of collective agreements and academic freedom.

Step 2: Fall/Winter 2020, Fuller CR and reform

As part of a fuller curriculum review, we propose examining all core MScPI course syllabi, both individually and holistically, to make changes for the 2021-2022 academic year and for Winter 2021 where possible. The review process will consider sufficiency of anti-Black racism and related content in both individual courses, and the curriculum as a whole to assure that the content is broad, diverse, not substantially overlapping, and appropriate with respect to the positioning of courses within the two-year curricular map.

We believe that to seriously address anti-Black racism in the curriculum, we must engage professional Black planners, with knowledge of both the local and international context. We also firmly believe that these Black planners should be paid for this work. As such, we will request funds from the Graduate Chair and the St. George Department Chair for this initiative, to be conducted over the course of the next year.

We will recommend that this review process include consideration and development of your idea that a mechanism be developed to include material and insights from those with lived experiences of the issues at hand. As part of this, we will work with students, alumni and the planning profession to diversify the guest speakers in classes to share their experiences and inform the educational experience.

We believe the review should include all courses, not just the core, as well as non-classroom experiences and elements of the MScPI and PhD training, including mentoring, funding, and faculty diversity.

The Planning Committee will provide our community of students, staff and faculty with a timeline and with updates until this work has made mutually agreed satisfactory progress.

Faculty, Staff, and Student Training

- Require all faculty, staff and incoming students in the MScPl program to undertake anti-oppression training (currently this training is optional for students during orientation, but is a critically important element of the orientation program; it is also our understanding the faculty, including sessional instructors, are not required by the Department to undertake this training. Here, the planning program should leverage and advance the mandate of the University's Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office).

Response

We agree with students that this training is vitally important. Training is a departmental issue as much as a program one, and we will work with the Graduate Chair and St. George Chair, strongly recommending that all faculty, staff and students undertake such training as we examine whether we have the capacity within collective agreements/other legal parameters to make it mandatory. We will also be consulting students to solicit input on selection of trainers and training content for planning in particular. In the meantime, we will participate in such training ourselves.

Larger Strategy Requests

All of the above and below should be incorporated into a long-term strategy to operationalize racial equity throughout the MScPl program and the planning profession, including but not limited to:

- A definition of anti-Black racism and racial equity, broadly, and in relation to the profession;
- Commissioning a racial equity audit to identify existing strengths and weaknesses within the Department and subsequent solutions for implementation;
- Department policies to ensure the hiring of more BIPOC staff and faculty, with an emphasis on Black faculty, for the planning program specifically (this will provide much needed mentorship opportunities for students of colour); and
- Providing continued support, financially and otherwise, to programs like the Mentoring Initiative for Indigenous & Planners of Colour (MIPOC) that offer off-campus mentorship opportunities for BIPOC students with alumni and planning professionals across the city.

Response:

We agree that a larger Inclusion and Diversity Strategy needs to be created and implemented both for the Planning Program and in the Department including the points you have made above.

The planning committee will work with students to develop a definition of anti-Black racism as part of our curriculum review this coming year where we will take stock of how we define ourselves.

We are very much in support of a racial equity audit, and will work with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and with Graduate and St. George Department Administration to implement such an initiative.

We are also committed to working to develop additional support, including financial support, and mentoring opportunities for indigenous students and other racialized students. We do not have capacity for direct fundraising, but will work likewise with Graduate and St. George Department administration to lobby for and develop additional resources. We will also bring this to the Planning Alumni Community who may be able to support these efforts.

In terms of mentorship, earlier in the summer, we extended Jay Pitter's Bousfield Appointment, in which she offered to help develop more mentoring opportunities for our students from outside of the University focusing on BIPOC students, and we will reconnect with her on this soon. We are committed to continuing this work after her term ends and very much appreciate the work of MIIPOC who we see as an ally in our efforts

We also see hiring more BIPOC staff and faculty as a priority, as does the EDIC. We have a strong consensus for planning program hires that recruiting, hiring, and retaining BIPOC faculty is a very high priority. We have relatively few opportunities to hire new faculty, but this criterion is an explicit consideration and priority in our decisions. We will also explore hiring a Professor of Practice for one of our next opportunities as a way to widen our applicant pool and bring more lived experience into the faculty complement.

Finally, we know this all will require continuous effort and commitment. Not all of these changes will be easy given our complex institutional context. Nevertheless, we look forward to working with students, and remain open to constructive criticism and collaborative processes--both of which we regard as much-appreciated resources for this important work.

Sincerely,

Paul Hess
Katharine Rankin

Faculty Co-signatories
Kanishka Goonewardena
Jason Hackworth
Sue Ruddick
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Jason Spicer
Lindsay Stephens