



**Advancing Racial Equity through a Systematic Review of Disciplines and Practices of the
Built Environment
Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP)**

Culture Assessment and Admissions Findings Executive Summary and Recommendations

December 2020

DDC's approach to current state assessment involved applying a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens to the organization in order to gauge current cultural conditions, the openness and willingness of leadership and staff to engage in DEI work, and the types of changes that would signal meaningful progress. Beginning in September 2020, DDC took a deep dive into GSAPP's institutional culture to identify concrete actions that GSAPP could start taking immediately and in the coming years.

APPROACH

Through an analysis of existing data, interviews, and focus groups, reviewing existing practices, policies, communications, and outcomes related to recruitment and admissions, DDC has aggregated key findings and observations across multiple dimensions of the organization's culture. Interviews and focus group were conducted with approximately 140 GSAPP students, faculty, alumni, staff, and leadership.

ASSESSMENT

Key findings and observations form the current state assessment where DDC assessed GSAPP's evolution against an anti-racism continuum. The continuum stages are: Not Yet Started; Ready to Start; Launched; Well on the Way; and Exemplary. DDC assessment found that GSAPP primarily resides closer to the "Ready to Start" stage in a meaningful way due to emerging priorities and implementation of recommended actions that will move GSAPP towards becoming an anti-racist organization. For the assessment components of Leadership, Recruitment, and Data, GSAPP is in between "Ready to Start" and "Launched," representing areas for priority actions in the near term.

DDC assessed multiple organizational components that influence GSAPP's culture against a continuum that considers how institutions evolve toward anti-racism. We also considered the lived experience of the culture itself as shared by participants from the GSAPP community.

Organizational Components	Continuum on Becoming an Anti-racist Organization				
	Not Yet Started	Ready to Start	Launched	Well on the Way	Exemplary
Mission/Vision			✓		
Leadership			✓		
DEI Structure		✓			
Recruitment and Admissions			✓		
Professional Development		✓			
Curriculum, Pedagogy/Instruction	(Work being led by Anti-Racism Task Force - not evaluated by DDC)				
Data, Accountability			✓		
Diverse Faculty and Staff		✓			
Community	✓				
Communication			✓		



Culture Assessment – Executive Summary and Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our near-term recommendations include the following:

GSAPP Overall including Dean's Office

- Create a dean-level role or a direct report to the Dean focused on diversity, equity and inclusion with resources and infrastructure support to sustain culture change work
- Examine the outreach and recruitment process of adjunct faculty to attract more BIPOC applicants
- Consider a more equitable structure for studio assignments through the lottery to offer broader opportunity for students to see the work of more Black faculty
- Formalize mentoring/professional development opportunities with GSAPP alumni board for greater connections, career growth and advancement for students and alumni
- Identify concrete opportunities in the near term to partner with schools, community groups, or organizations in the local community
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of administrators, staff, and faculty as related to GSAPP's anti-racism work
- Find ways to celebrate the people of GSAPP intentionally

GSAPP Leadership including Program Directors

- Develop and declare core values and vision that will help GSAPP create and reinforce a safe, equitable, and inclusive and unbiased professional environment
- Create mechanisms of accountability and transparency for anti-racism work beyond the Dean's office
- Launch required coursework on anti-racism across GSAPP programs
- Find ways to celebrate the people of GSAPP intentionally
- Identify concrete opportunities in the near term to partner with schools, community groups, or organizations in the local community
- Establish regular meeting forums to support transparency in information sharing, collaboration, and learning across programs

GSAPP Leadership including Program Directors (cont.)

- If we consider that the virtual space is the new “built environment” for the moment, identify ways to build relationships and community across platforms

GSAPP Faculty

- Build the muscle in leadership to engage in tough conversations and own the change needed
- Center the work and contributions of Black faculty
- Develop and maintain an ongoing GSAPP anti-racism reading list with physical or digital copies available at the library or online that includes works by event speakers and GSAPP faculty
- Consider how to continue the work of the Anti-Racism Task Force

GSAPP Admissions

- Targeted outreach to HBCUs, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and universities in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern region of the U.S. Greater emphasis on outreach to institutions in the Greater New York region that award a large number of bachelor’s degrees in architecture and related fields to BIPOC students
- Utilize videos and visual content already on GSAPP’s social media platforms as part of the targeted outreach efforts so that new prospective students learn about the distinct degree programs GSAPP offers and the exciting academic and community projects happening at GSAPP
- Expand marketing efforts and educate students and faculty about the focus of each GSAPP program and the potential educational and career opportunities
- Adapt a combination of merit and financial need in an effort to reduce financial barriers, increase equity and access to education, and yield the highest caliber students who are able to profit from and contribute to the GSAPP experience
- Explore naming opportunities for scholarship funds toward the recruitment of historically underrepresented groups at GSAPP
- Explore continuation of the COVID Emergency Fund (to be renamed) as a process that is now set up and has enabled students to apply with special circumstances during the academic year



Admissions Findings – Executive Summary and Recommendations

DDC assessed multiple admissions components that impact GSAPP's student racial and ethnic diversity. We consider how the School can evolve toward a more racially diversity place. We also considered the larger context of diversity at peer institutions and the diversity of bachelor's and master's degree earners across the U.S.

Admissions Components	Continuum on Increasing Student Racial and Ethnic Diversity				
	Not Yet Started	Ready to Start	Launched	Well on the Way	Exemplary
Boosting Applicants from Underrepresented Groups: Outreach to Institutions with the most URG graduates		✓			
Boosting Applicants from Underrepresented Groups: Partnerships with HBCUs and Hispanic Serving Institutions			✓		
Boosting Applicants from Underrepresented Groups: Outreach to Minority Professional Groups and Networks		✓			
Infusing Equity in the Admissions Review and Selection Process: Revising Admissions Metrics			✓		
Infusing Equity in the Admissions Review and Selection Process: Removing Implicit Bias from Selection Process	✓				
Increasing Yield of Admitted Black and Domestic Hispanic Students			✓		

BOOSTING APPLICANTS FROM UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Key findings:

- Most of the universities producing the largest number of M-Arch applicants are not the schools conferring the largest number of bachelor's degrees in architecture to African American and Hispanic students.
- Most GSAPP programs receive the majority of their domestic applications from a very small number of universities

Recommendations:

- Target marketing of GSAPP programs to institutions that award the largest number of bachelor's and master's degrees in relevant fields to URM students, with a focus on HBCUs and Hispanic Serving Institutions, including:
 - Universities awarding the most bachelor's degrees in Architecture and B.Arch degrees to Black and Hispanic students: Prairie View A&M University, Morgan State University, University of Maryland College Park, University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas Tech University, Texas A&M University, Florida A&M University, Kennesaw State University, Woodbury University, University of Houston, among others
 - Several colleges in New York and New Jersey award a significant number of B.Arch degrees to Black and Hispanic students, including: CUNY New York City College of Technology, CUNY City College, NJIT, NYIT, Pratt, Cornell, among others
- Establish a collaborative partnership with an HBCU and a collaborative partnership with an HSI
- Reach out to individual cultural centers and student groups to reach specific student racial/ethnic groups, including at Land-grant Universities.
- The average age of MSRED students is 26, 1-year older than Urban Planning and nearly 2-years older than the average age of M-Arch students.
MSRED Recommendations:
 - Connect with Black and Hispanic business professional societies in the Greater New York region to promote the MSRED program.
 - Use LinkedIn (or similar) recruitment tools for employers to find potential applicants that fit your profile (those working in real estate, development or investment jobs in the Greater New York region etc.)

Recommendations for Boosting Applicants from Underrepresented Groups (cont.)

- Use existing scholarship funds to establish a scholarship named after a prominent Black and Hispanic architect (living or dead) focused on HBCU and HSI graduates.
- Establish a graduate level URM cohort program that would recruit a cohort of URM students from the same undergraduate institution or same region.
- Recommendation: Utilize videos and visual content already on GSAPP's social medial platforms as part of the targeted outreach efforts.
 - GSAPP has several degree programs that are extremely small nationally (number of universities awarding degrees in the field); therefore, these programs must expand marketing efforts and work to educate more students and even faculty about the focus of each GSAPP program and the potential educational and career opportunities.

INFUSING EQUITY IN ADMISSIONS REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Recommendations:

- Consider permanently eliminating the use of the GRE for the admissions review process.
- Evaluate metrics currently used in the admissions process that are biased indicators of excellence with ones based on cognitive, non-cognitive, and creative characteristics that properly align with the goals of each program within GSAPP.
- GSAPP should require implicit bias training for anyone serving on an admissions committee and implement a holistic admissions review process.

INCREASING YIELD OF ADMITTED BLACK AND DOMESTIC HISPANIC STUDENTS

Key finding: GSAPP continues to struggle to enroll admitted Black and Domestic Hispanic students across all programs.

- M-Arch: despite admitting more than twice the number of Black students in 2020 than in 2018, 13 compared to 5, fewer enrolled in 2020 than in 2018. The yield rate for Black students in 2020 was lower than for White and Asian students.
- Urban Planning: yield rate for Black students is above the overall average, but Hispanic students are enrolling at a much lower rate than other groups.
- MS Real Estate Development: has seen a significant increase in the yield rate for Hispanic students, increasing from 54.5 percent in 2018 to 84.6 percent in 2020.
- The number of Black admits in GSAPP programs, outside of M-Arch and Urban Planning, are too few for yield rates to be a relevant comparison.

Recommendations:

According to the College Board's 2019 Trends in Student Aid, "On average, black and Hispanic households have less wealth than those from other racial and ethnic groups. In 2014, when median net worth was \$130,800 for white households and \$156,500 for Asian households, it was \$17,500 for Hispanic households and \$9,600 for black households."

- Adjust merit and need metrics for determining Black and Hispanic scholarship recipients.
- GSAPP must either make a better financial offer than peer institutions or target a different set of Black and Hispanic students.
- Utilizing feedback from students and faculty of color, take any immediate steps possible to improve the sense of belonging, culture, and climate of GSAPP.