



# Report of the Task Force on Diversity in the Curriculum

August 2016

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Methodology .....	2
<b>Committee Discussions: An Evolving Curriculum.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Diverse Perspectives in Liberal Learning – Its History and Use .....	3
A University Diversity Requirement?.....	5
New Course Designation.....	6
Introductory Survey Courses.....	7
Concentrations.....	8
First-year and Sophomore Seminars .....	9
Inclusive Teaching Strategies.....	10
Engaged Scholars Initiative .....	11
<b>Evaluation .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Summary Recommendations.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>13</b>

## Introduction

In February 2016, Brown University published [\*Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion: An Action Plan for Brown University\*](#) (DIAP) as a detailed companion to the principles and objectives laid out three years prior in the University's strategic plan, *Building on Distinction*. The DIAP was produced in the wake of and in conversation with widespread national and on-campus student protests demanding that institutions of higher learning redress generations of failure to fully include people of all races, ethnicities, religious affiliations, socioeconomic classes, gender identities, sexual orientations, and disability statuses. Students, faculty, and staff challenged their respective institutions guided by the principle that colleges and universities should not be content to mirror disparities present in the larger society; rather, given the role of the university in developing critical thinkers and global citizens and leaders, it is a *fundamental site* for grappling with these inequities. Brown's DIAP, crafted after substantial community discussion and consultation through an open online form; email correspondence with faculty, staff, alumni, and community members; and a large number of open community forums, outlined a set of concrete, achievable actions around research, teaching, hiring, and community engagement directed towards making Brown a more fully diverse and inclusive campus.

With regard to undergraduate education, the plan laid out a set of programs geared toward ensuring that *all* students thrive in their chosen fields of study, while also committing the University to evaluating its curriculum to ensure sufficient educational offerings on issues of race, ethnicity, inequality and social justice. Later in February, Provost Richard Locke charged a Task Force on Diversity in the Curriculum to consider the efficacy of Brown's curriculum in providing students with opportunities to study and engage with these issues.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the Task Force was asked to examine how academic departments, centers, and programs, with support and structure from the College Curriculum Council and the Dean of the College office, could better support diversity learning goals and inclusive classroom practices across the curriculum. This report reflects the materials we have collected and the discussions and interviews we have held in response to that charge.

### *Methodology*

The Task Force met regularly throughout spring and summer of 2016 to discuss student curricular engagement with topics related to difference, inequality, and power, and the most effective ways to expand those opportunities. Guest speakers, including the vice president for academic development, diversity and inclusion, and representatives from the Swearer Center for Public Service and the division of campus life and student services, lent insight into existing curricular and co-curricular opportunities for examining questions of power, difference, and identity. In addition, Task Force members met with about twenty-five Directors of Undergraduate Studies at one of their regular meetings hosted by the Dean of the College. An informal follow-up survey was conducted to learn more about the conversations taking place in

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for the Task Force's full charge.

departments and to help the Task Force consider recommendations that might mitigate challenges or concerns. The offices of Institutional Research and the Registrar provided data on courses with a diversity-related curricular designation since Banner's implementation in 2007, and the number of students who took those courses by concentration. Data from 2013-2016 was also disaggregated by student's gender and status as a first-generation college student and member of a historically underrepresented group. The Task Force also reviewed sample syllabi from recent courses with the Diverse Perspectives in Liberal Learning (DPLL) designation across a range of departments. In an attempt to hear from a broader range of student voices on their use of course designators, the committee added a two-part question to the University's survey of first-year students and conducted an informal five-question questionnaire completed by approximately four hundred sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The Task Force also reviewed data from *The Brown Daily Herald's* 2016 undergraduate survey, which had just under a thousand respondents. Finally, with an eye toward benchmarking, the Task Force examined diversity requirements at a range of colleges and universities.<sup>2</sup>

## **Committee Discussions: An Evolving Curriculum**

The following section lays out the committee's conclusions and recommendations:

### *Diverse Perspectives in Liberal Learning - Its History and Use*

Brown established a diversity course indicator in 1985, following student protests about race relations at the University.<sup>3</sup> Having gone through several iterations since then in response to student and faculty feedback, in 2012-13, the course indicator was examined and redefined as part of the University's strategic planning process. The new "[Diverse Perspectives in Liberal Learning](#)" (DPLL) designation, approved by the College Curriculum Council in 2014, applies to courses that "offer students the means ... to understand the complex dynamics of social inequity, exclusion, and difference ... [and] to do something with what they learn." More specifically, DPLL courses are defined as those that:

- Expose and critique the diverse historical and cultural forces that shape the construction of knowledge in all disciplines;
- Teach the arts of critical reflection: questioning thoughtfully, listening openly, and speaking cogently about differing points of view;

---

<sup>2</sup> In addition, two Africana studies concentrators, Mina Asayesh-Brown '16 and Naomi Varnis '16, invited the Task Force to discuss their capstone project, a set of recommendations for five concentrations on ways to enhance opportunities for student engagement with issues of race, power, and privilege. Grounded in a survey completed by over one hundred students, their final report was "shaped by the disciplinary and epistemological traditions of Africana Studies, and inspired by the tenacity and commitment of student activism." (1) While their findings did not directly inform this report, both documents highlight a range of options that concentrations might adopt, or as the students articulate it, "we do not call for a university-wide 'diversity' requirement, but rather discipline-specific additions to and reframing of concentrations and pedagogy." Asayesh-Brown, Mina and Naomi Varnis. "The Critical Curriculum Project: Recommendations for Curricula Oriented Towards Inclusion and Justice at Brown University" (2016), 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B for a history of diversity course indicators at Brown.

- Develop responsible citizens by examining the ways that power and privilege affect human lives and providing pathways to meaningful change.

On average, there are approximately eighty courses – evenly distributed between humanities and social science departments (a handful are offered in the life sciences, nearly all in Public Health) – with the DPLL indicator offered each semester.

The Task Force reviewed the history of the DPLL designation as well as its efficacy in helping students identify course offerings on issues of race, ethnicity, inequality, and social justice, and in allowing departments – and the University as a whole – to communicate such offerings, especially in areas where students may not think to look for them. Our survey findings illustrated that while nearly half of surveyed students had heard of the DPLL course designation, many did not know what it meant. 27% of first-years and 15% of upperclass students who were surveyed had not even heard of the designation. Most students – regardless of class-year or racial or gender self-identification – did not use the designation in their course selection process. Yet in spite of the lack of intentionality around the use of the designation, about half of all Brown students graduate having taken at least one DPLL course – one quarter of all Brown students have taken *two or more* DPLL courses by the time they graduate.

The process for applying the curricular designation has been relatively facile. The course proposal system allows instructors and departments to check “diverse perspectives in liberal learning” from a list of curricular programs (other options include First-Year Seminar and writing-designated). A syllabus is required for submission, and the College Curriculum Council’s course proposal sub-committee, chaired by the senior associate dean for the curriculum, reviews the proposal, and makes a determination on the course – including the designation. With the exception of outreach to faculty upon the initial renaming of the designation in 2013-14 (including a targeted invitation to instructors of DVPS courses to add the DPLL designation), the process has been fairly muted and invisible. In fact, the course proposal system does not define DPLL or any of the other curricular programs. The dean for the curriculum has, on occasion, reached out to instructors whose courses would appear to merit the designation but who did not select DPLL in the proposal. In the vast majority of cases, faculty have no objections, having never really given the designation much thought.

The Task Force’s discussions focused on both the definition of DPLL as well as the ways in which it is used – or not used – by students and faculty. There was unanimous agreement within the Task Force that the current definition has become too expansive to be truly meaningful. The definition is so broad, in fact, that it could be difficult to find a Brown course, regardless of topic or discipline, which would *not* meet the definition. Most of the topics covered in DPLL courses – for instance African American literature, racial and ethnic politics in the U.S., and immigrant social movements – seem like appropriate choices for a designation that highlights courses on social inequity and difference. However, a course can be designated as DPLL if it “teach[es] the arts of critical reflection: questioning thoughtfully, listening openly, and speaking cogently about

differing points of view;” one might argue that every Brown course should aspire to develop these skills. We share the concerns expressed by previous committees – including the two that crafted the “Diversity Perspectives” and “Diverse Perspectives in Liberal Learning” designations – about the value of considering diversity as “not simply as a descriptive category, a label for courses with some specified content, but also as a springboard for critical analysis.”<sup>4</sup> *Certainly, students should consider not just those marginalized by social categories, but the constructs themselves, along with the ways in which knowledge production and our very disciplines have been shaped by ideologies of human difference.* Yet a definition whose breadth renders it almost meaningless does not help Brown – or its students – do the important work of deepening their intellectual engagement with the pressing questions defined in the DIAP or of creating “more just, diverse, and inclusive communities” in our classrooms.<sup>5</sup>

The committee explored two options in response to this conundrum: establishing a diversity requirement for all Brown students and/or redefining the course designation to inspire and promote deeper student engagement with these issues.

**A University Diversity Requirement:** Task Force members engaged in a wide-ranging, substantive conversation about whether Brown should adopt a University-wide diversity requirement. A handful of institutions of higher learning began adding such a requirement to their undergraduate curricula in the early 1990s. Others, most recently the University of California, Los Angeles and Hamilton College (with an otherwise open curriculum akin to Brown’s) took up the question in response to the wave of student protests and faculty critiques in the wake of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Brown’s undergraduate student body has been divided on the issue. According to *The Brown Daily Herald*’s spring poll of 937 students, 58.4% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that all students should be “required to take a course with the Diverse Perspectives in Liberal Learning designation before receiving an undergraduate degree from Brown.”<sup>6</sup> 21.7% disagreed - somewhat or strongly - and 19.9% had no opinion. 35% of the just over 400 sophomores, juniors, and seniors who completed the Task Force’s informal survey agreed that Brown should have a diversity requirement. 29% of respondents agreed that concentrations should require “diversity-related” courses.

While recognizing the underlying desire for a requirement, the Task Force ultimately decided against recommending one, feeling that adding an additional requirement violated the spirit of the open curriculum without ensuring deep or meaningful engagement with issues of inequity or racism. Many believed that having a requirement would serve as a *disincentive* to students, who would be more engaged and motivated to learn if they were following their own interests rather

---

<sup>4</sup> Brown University, *College Curriculum Council Subcommittee on Diversity in the Curriculum: Report and Recommendations* (2002), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Brown University, *Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion: An Action Plan for Brown University* (February 1, 2016), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Editorial Staff, “Spring 2016 Poll Results and Methodology,” *Brown Daily Herald*, April 14, 2016, <http://www.browndailyherald.com/2016/04/14/spring-2016-poll-results-and-methodology/>.

than adhering to imposed distribution regulations. Even without a formal requirement, nearly two-thirds of surveyed upperclass students expressed an interest in taking courses on power, privilege, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and other social markers of difference. Instead of a University mandate that students engage with “diversity-related” questions, the Task Force recommends that the University **increase the number and visibility of opportunities** for such engagement. A revised curricular designation, if properly defined and administered, is an important step towards this goal.

**New Course Designation:** The Task Force’s data and discussions pointed to a curricular designation that appears to be – quite frankly – ineffective. These shortcomings may only be exacerbated by the University’s spring 2016 adoption of Courses @ Brown, a robust course search and registration application that allows keyword searches and could therefore make a curricular program grounded in a particular theme obsolete. Given this set of concerns, the Committee debated the enduring value of a curricular designation that is not tied to a cohort (like first-year or sophomore seminars) or to a requirement (like the writing designation). Nevertheless, the Task Force came to a consensus that a curricular designation still has a role to play, first and foremost, as a mechanism for highlighting the University’s commitment to addressing issues of race, ethnicity, inequality, and social justice in the curriculum. The designation also provides a means to underscore the theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical goals of a particular course while providing a resource for departments seeking to direct their students to relevant courses – both within and beyond the discipline – that might be relevant to their education but stand outside the concentration. For example, a concentration in the life sciences might use the course designator to direct concentrators toward courses that will help them develop a critical understanding of the way race intersects with the study of science.

Given this point of departure, the Task Force recommends that the College Curriculum Council replace DPLL with a new curricular designation and adopt a more rigorous review process for applying that designation; it also recommends that the Dean of the College office use its advising structures to communicate more effectively – particularly with incoming students – about the value of taking these courses. In an effort to define more precisely what we mean by “diversity” courses, the Task Force proposes a curricular designation that would highlight courses on “Race, Power, and Privilege” (RPP). RPP courses would – in their content and their course objectives – examine issues of structural inequality, racial formations and/or disparities, and systems of power within a complex, pluralistic world.

With the above in mind, RPP courses may investigate:

- the ways different forms of power and privilege construct racial and identity formations in the U.S. and/or globally; the cultural, political, and intellectual responses to this racialization;
- the production of categories of ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, ability, citizenship status, and geography (and their intersections);

- the structures, institutions, practices, and attitudes that enable, maintain, or mitigate domestic and/or global disparities in health, income, education outcomes, media representations, etc.;
- the production of knowledge and difference in the context of discourses on race, power, and privilege.

If approved by the College Curriculum Council, this designation would more accurately reflect the institutional priorities delineated in *Building on Distinction* and *Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion* and the recent discussions held on campus. Like the DIAP, with its dual emphasis on *diversity* and *inclusion*, this new definition explicitly designates “race” as a consequential social category, while also highlighting broader systems and structures that define social categories beyond race. Given the breadth and vagueness of the existing designation, the Task Force had lengthy discussions about whether or not its replacement should highlight a social category(ies), and if so, should it highlight race but not, for instance, gender/gender expression, religion, or other social categories. To do so might give the false impression that Task Members saw “race” as *the* consequential social category, or as more salient than its counterparts. Such a perspective would belie the intersectional production of these social categories. Yet ultimately, the Task Force decided not only to name “race,” but to *foreground* it for two primary reasons. First, much of the debate on campus, as well as in the larger national movement, has explicitly focused on the practices and structural consequences of anti-black racism in the U.S. Second, and more substantively, the recent national events illustrated the degree to which U.S. society is not “post-racial,” as is often argued. Task Force members felt that “race” should be named as a *corrective* mechanism, given its invisibility and even erasure in our national discourse as well as in the academy.

The Task Force also determined that the RPP designation should be applied to courses regardless of national boundaries. In this case, although the campus and national discourse was largely U.S.-focused, some Task Force members felt strongly that comparative and transnational frameworks for understanding inequality should not be excluded from this category. Therefore, the definition assumes engagement with questions of empire and post-coloniality as well as around racial formations outside and beyond the U.S.

Given the larger aims of the University DIAP, new and existing courses that do not examine race, power, or privilege per se, but do include narratives and perspectives that have historically been excluded are of value and should certainly be offered. However, the goal of this new designation is to highlight a particular *kind* of course. We expect that the issues brought to light in the current climate and discourse have long term implications and will merit constant attention and discussion for years to come. Indeed, our strategic plan, *Building on Distinction* operates on the premise that “the need for a global citizenry well-versed in the breadth of disciplinary approaches to societal issues and grounded in skills of critical thinking, communication, data analysis, and cultural understanding will become increasingly acute in the years ahead.”

Increasing the visibility of courses that focus on these pressing societal issues will most certainly “equip [our students] to be leaders in their respective fields as well as outstanding global citizens.”<sup>7</sup>

Equally important as the definition, the Task Force felt, was the infrastructure surrounding it – both in terms of the process of applying the designation to particular courses and the institutional support and visibility of such courses. Courses under consideration for the RPP designation should be reviewed, not only by the standing course proposal subcommittee, but also by the senior associate dean for diversity programs and at least two faculty members with expertise in an area represented in the designation.

**Introductory Survey Courses:** The Task Force also recommends the creation of several large interdisciplinary introductory survey courses (preferably team-taught) addressing issues of racial, economic, social, and cultural inequity in the United States and globally. Unlike the standard disciplinary-based introductory survey courses offered at most universities, these courses would seek to be broad and thematic rather than topical. While the Task Force has not predetermined the content of these courses, our hope is that they would pull from at least two disciplines and provide students with an introduction both to the topic of study and to various ways of thinking about that topic from multidisciplinary perspectives. By focusing on incoming students, Brown would seek to operationalize the commitments of the DIAP in the first curricular opportunities available to our students.

Courses might address (but are not limited to):

- Racism
- Intersectionality
- Empire/Colonialism
- The Making of Inequality
- Science and Race
- Gender and Sexuality
- Genocide
- Slavery
- Migration

These courses would be advertised to incoming students by the Dean of the College office in the summer before students arrive on campus, and first years would be able to register during the First-year Seminar lottery. The courses would be open to students of all class years, although as

---

<sup>7</sup> Brown University, *Building on Distinction: A New Plan for Brown* (October 26, 2013), 10.



introductory lecture courses, the syllabi would be geared to first- and second-year students or those with no background in the subjects in question.

In order to develop these courses, a committee of faculty from several departments across the divisions and working under the senior associate dean of the curriculum will solicit course proposals each year with the goal of offering four such courses, two in the fall and two in the spring.

Each course will be supplied with teaching assistants to ensure robust discussion sections, and the TAs will be trained in best practices in inclusive pedagogy by the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. These courses would all be designated as “University Courses<sup>8</sup>” and would also hold a new designation, RPP.

**Concentrations:** Although Task Force members concluded that a university-wide requirement did not make sense for Brown, many members saw concentrations as the natural home for such work given that Brown students are used to fulfilling requirements through their concentration of choice. One significant component of the University’s DIAP is the requirement that all departments articulate diversity and inclusion action plans of their own, subject to approval by the provost and the vice president of academic development, diversity, and inclusion. Although these plans focus on all aspects of departmental life, including the hiring of faculty and staff; the recruitment, selection, and retention of graduate students; and the inclusivity of departmental culture more generally, each plan also considers ways of expanding the department’s undergraduate concentration and curricular offerings to include a more expansive set of opportunities for students to engage with issues of diversity and inclusion.

Although departments have already submitted their respective plans, both President Paxson and Provost Locke have referred to these plans as living documents, subject to revision and further development. As departments receive feedback about the plans they submitted in June 2016, this Task Force thus recommends that academic units continue to assess their concentrations and curricula to determine how to more fully include narratives, perspectives, and ways of knowing traditionally underrepresented (or unrepresented) in their courses and in some cases, in their fields. For those departments or concentrations for which additional requirements do not make sense, the Task Force recommends that such units suggest that students take one or more relevant RPP courses as an elective.

---

<sup>8</sup> University courses (UNIV) are attached to no particular department of instruction. Implemented in the fall of 1958, the UNIV course designation was developed to highlight integrative courses focused on allowing students to synthesize several fields of learning. According to the most recent University Bulletin to provide a definition, UNIV courses “provide students with the opportunity to integrate their understanding of major areas of learning and explore relationships among diverse forms of human experience; or to relate one or more disciplines to a broader context; or to focus on large and fundamental problems that need to be approached through several disciplines or by ways not found in existing disciplines.” Brown University, *Bulletin of the University for the Years 2007-2009* (2007), 606.

The Task Force also recommends that the College Curriculum Council review process, which currently assesses concentrations in the year following departmental external reviews, be revised to include an assessment of the breadth and depth of the unit's course offerings, focusing particularly on – although not limited to – opportunities for students to explore issues of race, ethnicity, inequality and social justice.

**Continued support for both First-Year and Sophomore Seminars:** The University DIAP has committed the College to doubling the number of First-Year and Sophomore Seminars related to issues of power, privilege, inequality, and social justice.<sup>9</sup> Several departmental action plans pledged to encourage their faculty to consider offering such courses as well. Task Force members agreed that these smaller seminars should continue to be a priority, even as new, larger introductory courses with well-trained TAs are developed.

Brown's First-Year Seminar (FYS) program was launched in 2002 to enable closer relationships between first-year students and Brown faculty members. With enrollment capped at twenty students per course, students benefit from an intimate setting usually reserved for upper-level courses, allowing them to ask questions, contribute ideas, and receive regular feedback on the work they produce. The small size also lends itself to seminars that emphasize fieldwork, laboratory work, and other projects. After years of steady growth, approximately 85 First-Year Seminars are offered each year, serving between one-half and two-thirds of the incoming class.

Modeled on the FYS program, Sophomore Seminars were developed in fall 2013 as part of the University's strategic plan to provide students with small, discussion-based classes addressing "critical questions of identity, equity, and justice."<sup>10</sup> The program was expanded to include small courses on a range of other topics, but the emphasis has remained on courses that examine the constructions of difference and identity by way of curriculum development grants made available to faculty interested in developing such courses. In 2015-16, fourteen sophomore seminars were offered serving close to two hundred students; half of these courses were on topics related to social change, cross-cultural identities, and race and visual culture. Faculty who received support from the Dean of the College and Provost's offices for curriculum development (including obtaining and translating primary documents and financing visits from guest scholars and scholar-activists) have reported their enthusiasm about the unique learning opportunities afforded by these courses.<sup>11</sup>

While the Sophomore Seminar program is currently too small and nascent for a thorough investigation, we suggest an evaluation at the five-year mark. The Task Force recommends that at that time, the Dean of the College office conduct an assessment, based on both direct and

---

<sup>9</sup> DIAP, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Brown University, *Building on Distinction*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> In summer 2016, the Dean of the College office conducted an informal, qualitative survey to gather feedback from faculty who received curriculum development grants for their sophomore seminars.

indirect measures including focus groups, to assess the impact of both the FYS and Sophomore Seminar Program in light of institutional goals around diversity and inclusion, as well as other factors such as faculty-student interactions. We also recommend that in the interim, faculty interested in introducing issues of identity, equity and justice to their First Year seminars be provided access to curricular development funds in the Office of the Dean of the College.

**Inclusive Teaching Strategies:** The Task Force was also charged with considering ways the University might increase its support for inclusive teaching practices. Here we consulted with the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, which, in 2016-17, anticipates enhancing professional development around inclusive teaching through the following activities:

- expanding discussion of inclusive teaching in its programming on reflective teaching and course design;
- enhancing support for collaborative, active-learning pedagogy at new faculty and teaching assistant orientations; (Research has shown that such methods enhance student learning in diverse classrooms, as successfully demonstrated in Brown's large introductory STEM courses that have adopted these techniques.)
- collaborating closely with the vice president for academic development, diversity and inclusion to maintain the Inclusive Classroom Series and to respond as possible to needs presented by departments in their diversity and inclusion action plans;
- further developing the Sheridan Center's existing web resources on inclusive teaching;
- hiring new staff with an eye toward building capacity in evidence-based inclusive teaching, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses.

The Task Force felt strongly that all concentrations could benefit from establishing more intentional development opportunities around inclusive teaching practices as a means of strengthening learning opportunities and communication between Brown's diverse student body and the faculty. We therefore recommend that departments work closely with the Sheridan Center to build strength in these arenas and that the University ensure that the Sheridan Center is adequately staffed to support such efforts.

**Engaged Scholars Initiative:** Finally, the Task Force was charged with considering ways in which the engaged scholars initiative might further encourage student engagement with questions of diversity and inclusion. Research suggests that educational frameworks that integrate community-based learning with more traditional forms of academic study increase student capacity to engage in dialogue across difference. In 2015, Brown launched the [Engaged Scholars Program](#) to support students, faculty, and community partners seeking to integrate teaching, research, and practice to advance scholarship and address social challenges facing communities and society as a whole. As a core program of the Swearer Center, in collaboration with the Dean of the College office and Brown concentrations, ESP provides students with educational pathways that connect academic theory and practice while providing faculty with support for the development and teaching of engaged courses and community-based research, and community partners with opportunities to collaborate with Brown students and faculty on

community-driven projects and research. ESP is currently offered to students in eleven concentrations and Brown hopes to expand the Engaged Scholars Program to forty concentrations over the next several years.

Following discussion with the director of the Swearer Center and the director of the Engaged Scholars Program, the Task Force proposes expanded support and development of this program, which provides unique curricular opportunities for students to engage with the diverse populations of Providence and beyond. Built into the Engaged Scholars Program, and into the Swearer Center's wider strategic plan moving forward, is a commitment to creating a sense of belonging and demarginalization by fostering inclusive learning environments, questioning the role of power and privilege in shaping society, and creating learning environments that lead to democratic skills for a diverse world. More specifically, the Swearer Center has established a range of curricular options (in partnership with faculty and departments) and co-curricular programs that builds on the power of immersive experiences to create space for dialogue across difference. The unique learning opportunities this program offers to Brown students provides an additional mechanism for operationalizing the DIAP at a curricular level with the potential for deep and sustained impact in the lives of our students, faculty, and broader Providence community. Finally, research also suggests that faculty from underrepresented backgrounds disproportionately desire opportunities to pursue engaged scholarship as a legitimate teaching and research mode. Investing in engaged scholarship will thus also strengthen our efforts to recruit and retain faculty from diverse backgrounds.

## **Evaluation**

The Task Force recommends that a university committee be charged in three years time to evaluate the success of the proposals listed here and make additional recommendations to ensure robust curricular opportunities for our students around issues of diversity and inclusion.

## **Recommendations (summary):**

- A. Create several large introductory survey courses (preferably team-taught) addressing issues of racial, economic, social, and cultural inequity in the United States and globally.
- B. Encourage all concentrations to provide meaningful engagement with issues of diversity and inclusion.
- C. Continue support for both First-Year and Sophomore Seminars that focus on power, privilege, and social justice, and assessment of both programs.
- D. Pending review and approval by the College Curriculum Council, replace "Diverse Perspectives in Liberal Learning" with a new curricular designation, "Race, Power, and Privilege" (RPP); develop a more robust review process within the College Curriculum Council.

- E. Enhance support and resources for instructors and teaching assistants on inclusive teaching strategies.
- F. Increase support for the Engaged Scholars Program.
- G. Reconvene a committee in three years to evaluate the progress made on the recommendations in this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Maud S. Mandel, Dean of the College, Professor of History and Judaic Studies (Chair)

Janet A. Blume, Associate Professor of Engineering, Senior Associate Dean of the Faculty

Tony Bogues, Asa Messer Professor of Humanities and Critical Theory, Director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, Professor of Africana Studies

Maryori Conde '18

Nancy Khalek, Associate Professor of Religious Studies

Ryan Lee '17

Besenia Rodriguez, Senior Associate Dean of Curriculum

David N. Weil, James and Meryll Tisch Professor of Economics

Kristi Wharton, Professor of Biology

## Appendix A

### **Task Force on Diversity in the Curriculum Charge**

*Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion: An Action Plan for Brown University*, promises to ensure a learning environment in which students from all backgrounds can thrive in their chosen fields of study. In addition, it commits the University to providing scholarly resources to support education and leading-edge research on issues of diversity, social justice, power and privilege around the globe, both in the present and throughout history. The Task Force on Diversity in the Curriculum is charged with considering how both commitments can be met in the arena of undergraduate education.

In 2002, a university committee examined how the Brown undergraduate curriculum could be altered so that students would have the “means not only to understand the complex dynamics of social inequity, exclusion, and difference but also to do something with what they learn.” This discussion resulted in the Diverse Perspectives in Liberal Learning (DPLL) designation for courses, as well as various other proposals for "moving diversity-related intellectual questions to the center of the curriculum." The Task Force will assess whether the DPLL designation has served its intended purpose and take up the following questions:

- To what extent does the DPLL definition meet Brown’s current goals regarding curricular needs? How has the DPLL designation functioned to date? What kinds of courses carry this designation? To what extent do faculty make use of this curricular designation? In what ways have students used the DPLL designation to help with their course selection?
- Does the University curriculum provide ample opportunities to study issues of diversity, social justice, power and privilege around the globe both in the present and throughout history and across disciplines?
- What opportunities are available for encouraging Brown students to engage intellectually with questions of diversity and inclusion during their time at Brown?
- Are sophomore seminars a productive mechanism for encouraging student engagement with questions of diversity and inclusion? How can the Engaged Scholars initiative further these objectives?
- How can departments support diversity learning goals at Brown? In what ways can the departmental diversity and inclusion plans be used to forward these goals? The College Curriculum Council? The Office of the Dean of the College?

- How is the university supporting inclusive classroom practices across the curriculum? Are there ways to improve or expand best practices in this area?

## Appendix B

### **A Brief History of Diversity Course Indicators at Brown**

Brown established a diversity course indicator in 1985, following student protests about diversity and race relations at the University. In response, President Howard Swearer and the Brown Corporation's Board of Fellows appointed a Visiting Committee on Minority Life and Education charged with "evaluat[ing] current programs and mak[ing] recommendations for new strategies for improving the climate of racial relations at the University" (ix, Executive Summary, "The American University and the Pluralist Ideal").<sup>12</sup> Among the committee's recommendations was that "the University communicate more effectively to students the efforts already made to broaden course offerings [that] consider the cultures and heritage of American minority and Third World peoples." The recommendation resulted in the creation of a new course indicator, "American Minority Perspectives" (AMP), which was defined as follows:

AMP courses examine the experiences in and contributions to American society of African Americans, Latino Americans [sic], Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Two kinds of courses are included in this category: courses in which the central thrust bears specifically upon the experience of one or more of the above-mentioned groups, and courses in which at least a two-week segment of the syllabus is devoted to the exploration of some aspect of the minority experience in the United States (from 2002 Armstrong memo).

The AMP course indicator was used from fall 1986 until spring 2003, when it was replaced by the "Diversity Perspectives" (DVPS) course designation. This new designation was the result of another set of Committee recommendations, this time prompted by a Visiting Committee on Diversity formed at the suggestion of the Brown Corporation in 2000. The Visiting Committee was charged with assessing Brown's progress, challenges, and opportunities related to diversity in hiring and retaining faculty of color; admitting and retaining graduate students of color; and providing diversity-related educational experiences. Among its recommendations, the Committee called on Brown to "create more and broader opportunities for the study of diversity-related questions" in the curriculum ("Diversity, Pluralism, and Community at Brown," page 9). A year later, the College Curriculum Council formed a Subcommittee on Diversity to answer this call. In February 2002, it issued "Diversity in the Curriculum," which called for an expanded as well as more specific definition of the term "diversity" in relation to the curriculum. The report also

---

<sup>12</sup> "The American University and The Pluralist Ideal," [https://brown.edu/web/documents/diversity/history/The\\_American\\_University\\_and\\_the\\_Pluralist\\_Ideal.pdf](https://brown.edu/web/documents/diversity/history/The_American_University_and_the_Pluralist_Ideal.pdf)

advocated moving beyond diversity as a descriptive category so that it would become a springboard for critical analysis. The subcommittee recommended replacing the American Minorities Perspectives course indicator with a Diversity Perspectives course designation. A memo sent by Dean of the College Paul Armstrong to department chairs in October 2002 provided the following definition of Diversity Perspectives courses:

- [DVPS courses] treat, primarily or at least substantially, the knowledge and experience of previously underrepresented groups; or
- [DVPS courses] centrally examine the ways in which disciplines, histories, and paradigms of knowledge are reconfigured by the study of diversity-related intellectual questions.

Unlike the AMP course designator, the DVPS designator included groups defined not only by race and ethnicity but also by gender, sexual orientation, disability, “or other salient characteristics” (Armstrong memo to faculty, October 2002). Importantly, the DVPS designator was not limited to U.S. perspectives. It also called for “substantial” treatment of the knowledge and experience of underrepresented groups, not just two weeks’ focus, as had been the case with the AMP criteria.

In 2012-13, the course indicator was examined and redefined once again as part of the University’s strategic planning process. Based on feedback from faculty and students, a new, even broader description was developed and approved by the College Curriculum Council in fall 2014. “Diverse Perspectives in Liberal Learning” (DPLL) courses “offer students the means ... to understand the complex dynamics of social inequity, exclusion, and difference ... [and] to do something with what they learn.” On average, there are approximately eighty courses - evenly distributed between humanities and social science departments (a handful are offered in the life sciences, nearly all in Public Health) - with the DPLL indicator offered each semester.