Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies
Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Approved by TDPS Equity Committee and Senate Faculty, Fall 2015

Context for the Strategic Plan:

The Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is a document that each academic unit is required to complete at the time of its Academic Program Review in order to assess the state of its unit in quantitative and qualitative terms, and to develop a plan for maintaining and/or improving its quantitative and qualitative efforts to positively incorporate a diverse population at every level—faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students. Plans are meant to articulate a vision to carry the department forward through the next several years. The plans are read not only by the Staff of the Division of Equity and Inclusion, but also by the Academic Senate committee DECC (Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate), and representatives of that committee will reach out to the Department at the midpoint in the plan to discuss departmental progress. DECC representatives will then report to the Divisional Council (DIVCO, a unit of faculty governance structures) on the progress that has been made, and if necessary, will make recommendations regarding additional steps that the unit can take to achieve its goals. In other words, this is a document that is meant to serve as an internal touchstone, but also as an external accountability measure for our intentional efforts to assure that our activities are in alignment with the campus priorities around equity and inclusion.

Terminology:

Certain terms that are central to the logic of this report are widely used, but often to different effects. For the purposes of this strategic plan, we wish to take time specifically to offer working definitions of the following terms: diversity, inclusion, race.

Diversity: In the context of this report, diversity refers to the quantitative and qualitative range of cultural identities represented within our departmental communities.
- In accordance with University priorities, we are particularly interested in increasing the quantity and quality of participation in our department by people from historically underrepresented/underserved groups:
    o Women
    o Ethnic minorities: African American, Chican@/Latin@, Native American, and Asian American and Pacific Islander (*note: while at the general campus level, Asian Americans are not considered an underrepresented minority population, within the Arts and Humanities, they certainly are, particularly at the faculty level)
    o People with disabilities
- These categories are highlighted because of U.S. society's long history of overt, intentional practices of segregation and discrimination against these groups,

which manifested in these groups being denied full access to higher education, attractive employment opportunities, important social and professional networks, and other social and cultural benefits.

- Socioeconomic difference, age, sexual orientations, and gender identities are becoming increasingly important social categories, particularly on this campus.
- Religious diversity is also an emerging priority.

Inclusion: In the context of this report, we use inclusion to refer to both the quantitative presence of people from diverse backgrounds, and also *the quality of their presence and participation in department activities*.

When assessing the inclusiveness of our department culture, we ask questions including:

- How easy is it for people from diverse backgrounds to gain access to the resources within our department, from courses to financial resources, mentorship, and professionalization activities?
- What barriers might prevent people from diverse backgrounds from accessing these resources, and how might we remove those barriers?

This is closely related to matters of climate: the quality of experience that people have within the department, the extent to which they feel welcomed, supported, and respected as they make their contributions to our community.

Race: In the context of this report, we consider race as category of social classification that shapes individual and collective experience. We believe that America is a racially aware society, which means that every individual has a racial identity within American culture.

- Racial identity has multiple layers:
  - At the internal/self-determined level, it includes:
    - How people choose to self-identify in racial terms.
    - The experiences and sensibilities that self-understood racial identity can produce for people.
    - The experiences that their self-understood identity might cause people to seek out.
  - At the externally imposed level, it includes:
    - The ways that others will classify a person in racial terms (based on physical appearance, behavior, language, knowledge of family background, etc.).
    - The ways that others will interact with a person on the basis of their understanding of the person's racial identity (e.g. the ways a person is expected to speak and behave in specific situations, the attitudes or beliefs they will be assumed to have, the talents and deficits they will be presumed to be possess).
  - Both of these levels shape the ways that individuals experience race in American culture.

- Beyond the person-to-person level of social interaction, racial difference is structured into American society:
  - Even though we no longer have legalized segregation or gender discrimination in most contexts, we have social structures that help to produce racially different outcomes, and patterns of inequality that are not the result of purely individual, intentional racial animosity, but are the result of long-standing patterns of inequality that are facilitated at the structural level.
  - Individuals are positioned within these structures and can help to perpetuate them without a desire to be harmful to others.
  - This means that racism is not just about individual, intentional acts of animosity, but about persistent racialized inequality at the broader social level. What are the structures of power and resource distribution that compel or incentivize individuals to act with overt, intentional animosity? What are the structures of power and resource distribution that make it easy for people to do so? Or that allow people to get away with doing so? Or to be rewarded for doing so? Structural change is even more important than the change of individual attitudes in eliminating racism.
- We understand race as dynamic: who gets placed in which racial category, and what meaning is associated with each category, changes over time.
  - Furthermore, in a single moment, or even in a single location, there is no one uniform way of 'being' any racial category.
  - There may be commonalities across people's experiences as members of the same group, but each person's experience of their racial identity is also unique.
- Finally, we know that race is always influenced by other social identity categories: gender; sexuality; physical, mental, and psychosocial ability status; veteran status; generation; region; nationality; socioeconomic class; and others. Each of these categories shapes how we experience the others (e.g. there are important similarities and differences between the experiences of wealthy and lower income members of a social group, there are gendered differences to the experiences of socioeconomic class, sexuality, and race/nationality, etc.). Generalizations are useful but they are never meant to displace or silence individual experiences that diverge from the generalization.