

To: Merit E. Janow, Dean
Scott Barrett, Vice Dean for Academic Affairs

From: Suresh Naidu and Jenny McGill
DEI Steering Committee Co-Chairs

Re: DEI Assessment and Recommendations

Date: July 6, 2021

We are pleased to submit the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) assessment report of Iere Strategies, the DEI consultants who have assisted our committee in carrying out a DEI assessment of SIPA over the past few months, together with our recommendations for initial actions to advance SIPA's commitments to DEI. We want to thank you for initiating this DEI assessment, and for your strong support of our committee's work throughout the process. We thank the other members of the DEI Steering Committee for their time, effort and constructive suggestions, as well as Iere Strategies for their dedication and flexibility in working within a short timeframe. We also want to thank the members of SIPA's Diversity Committee, as well as the many students, faculty, staff and alumni who generously shared their perspectives through surveys, focus groups and interviews.

This DEI assessment is part of a larger set of actions you initiated this past year – including internal reviews of SIPA's admissions and financial aid processes, student services and curriculum – in response to calls from many of our students and alumni to improve SIPA's commitment to DEI. These calls focused especially on increasing the representation of Black and Hispanic/Latinx students and faculty, and strengthening SIPA's attention to racial justice issues in its curriculum and in its engagement with the Harlem community. This DEI assessment takes place at a time when Columbia and other elite institutions are being challenged to reflect on their roles in reproducing racial inequality and to take more concrete steps to dismantle institutional racism and promote social justice. The assessment also takes place during a global health pandemic that forced SIPA to shift to remote classes, meetings and office work, and that prevented many SIPA students from even traveling to New York City. This critical self-examination is especially important for a school such as SIPA that aims to train future policymakers to tackle global and local policy challenges – including entrenched inequalities and patterns of exclusion – and to work effectively in diverse multicultural settings.

In this context, the DEI Steering Committee undertook an assessment this spring of SIPA's past and ongoing efforts to promote DEI, remaining gaps and areas for improvement, and possible actions to make SIPA a more diverse, equitable and inclusive community. With your approval, we engaged Iere Strategies, a DEI consultancy with existing ties to Columbia, to provide an expert and independent perspective, and we also considered DEI initiatives already under way at other Columbia schools and programs and at peer graduate schools elsewhere. Our methodology included review of internal data, reports and other documents; climate surveys of current students, faculty, staff and alumni (designed with input from Iere Strategies); focus groups with participants from these four constituencies and interviews with senior administrators and members of our committee (conducted by Iere Strategies); and ongoing communications with Iere Strategies and feedback on initial drafts of their report.

Some key insights from the DEI assessment, including responses to the climate surveys and Iere Strategies' findings from focus groups and interviews, include:

- In recent years, SIPA has committed to recruit more women and under-represented minority (URM) faculty. Despite changes in search practices, the proportion of full-time women and URM faculty remains low, although there is greater diversity among SIPA’s adjunct faculty. Additional strategies are needed in this area, including greater effort to retain and promote junior faculty.
- One of SIPA’s great strengths is its geographically diverse student body, with well over half of its students from outside the United States. However, Black and Hispanic/Latinx students are underrepresented among its US students, and SIPA has struggled to recruit more students from Africa. SIPA’s tuition, which is lower than that of other Columbia professional schools but higher than that of its peers, is a major barrier. In recent years, SIPA has intensified its efforts to recruit more URM students and substantially increased its financial aid budget (with a greater focus on need), but additional strategies are needed.
- In the area of curriculum, programs such as Urban and Social Policy and Gender and Public Policy support a number of courses addressing racial and other social justice issues, and the Dean’s recent Adjunct Diversity Initiative has further expanded these course offerings. A number of faculty in other programs have also revised their syllabi to pay greater attention to race and social justice, and to adopt more inclusive teaching practices, including in some core courses. However, more consistent guidance on DEI and inclusive teaching practices is needed.
- In terms of SIPA climate, the overall experience is varied. There is a generally high level of satisfaction among faculty and alumni, but much lower levels among staff and current students. No doubt exacerbated by the pandemic and remote environment, many current students, especially students of color, as well as many staff and some adjunct faculty, do not feel supported at SIPA. This sentiment was also shared by alumni of color. The Office of Student Affairs (OSA), partnering with the Diversity Committee and the Diversity Coalition of student organizations, has launched various initiatives to promote inclusion and wellness among SIPA students, and these efforts should be further supported and expanded. This is not only the responsibility of OSA and the Diversity Committee; there needs to be broader school-wide support for students of color.
- Experience elsewhere demonstrates that efforts to improve **compositional diversity** in an educational setting such as SIPA are unlikely to succeed without complementary measures to improve the quality of the educational experience (for students) and work environment (for faculty and staff), including the quality of interaction with diverse peers. Hence, diversity efforts must also pay attention to the fairness of institutional processes (**equity**) and foster a sense of belonging among community members (**inclusion**).
- SIPA has made progress in a number of areas related to DEI, but these efforts have often been siloed and not communicated widely. SIPA’s hierarchical structure also has inhibited school-wide efforts to advance DEI.
- A large number of SIPA alumni participated in the DEI assessment and are eager to contribute to SIPA’s DEI efforts going forward. These alumni are an untapped resource for SIPA’s future DEI work.

This assessment provides an important opportunity for SIPA to acknowledge its shortcomings related to DEI, to build on its ongoing DEI efforts, and to move forward in a more unified and coordinated way – a “one SIPA approach”. This is also an opportunity for SIPA to model good practices in DEI for schools of international affairs and public policy, and to prepare our students to advance DEI in their future workplaces.

In their report, Iere Strategies propose an ambitious set of actions, building on current SIPA initiatives related to leadership and organization of DEI efforts, faculty diversity, curriculum and teaching, student recruitment and financial aid, support to current students including students of color and international students, staff diversity and inclusion, and alumni and community engagement. They note that no one recommendation is a “silver bullet” and that sustainable change toward greater DEI takes time and concerted effort. We broadly support these recommendations, recognizing that some actions are already being implemented or can be implemented quickly, while others would require more time, resources and adaptation to the SIPA context. To help translate these recommendations into concrete actions, we have taken the liberty of summarizing the recommendations in the attached annex.

To move SIPA’s DEI agenda forward, we recommend these initial actions:

- **Share this memo and the DEI consultants’ report with the SIPA community.** We were heartened by the active participation of faculty, staff, students and alumni in the climate surveys and focus groups for this DEI assessment. We recommend involving all segments of the SIPA community in DEI efforts going forward, starting with sharing this memo and Iere Strategies’ report with them.
- **Begin a search for a dean or director for DEI and community engagement.** While all segments of the SIPA community should be involved in advancing DEI, having a dean or director with primary responsibility for leading and coordinating DEI efforts will significantly accelerate SIPA’s progress and also signal SIPA’s commitment to DEI to the SIPA community and to prospective students and faculty. This individual would take the lead in developing a DEI action plan for SIPA, in consultation with senior administrators, the Diversity Committee and other constituencies, and would coordinate DEI capacity building activities for faculty, senior administrators, staff and students, as well as tracking and reporting on progress. The individual should have substantial DEI expertise and experience, and should be provided with the resources needed to carry out the work. To fill the position, we recommend encouraging applications from alumni with relevant expertise and experience. The positive response of alumni to the DEI assessment also suggests there could be potential donors interested in funding this position and other DEI initiatives.
- **Confer with the chair and other current members of the Diversity Committee on restructuring the committee to oversee implementation of SIPA’s DEI agenda.** We fully support Iere Strategies’ recommendation to subsume the work of our DEI Steering Committee under a restructured Diversity Committee that includes representatives of all segments of the SIPA community, including senior administrators, full-time and adjunct faculty, officers of administration and unionized staff, students and alumni. Ideally, the restructured and rebranded “DEI Committee” would be in place by the beginning of the coming school year. As indicated in the annex attached, one role of this committee could be to assist in the search for a new DEI dean or director. (However, we suggest that the search process begin soon, even if more time is needed to restructure the committee.)
- **Establish a faculty subcommittee of the DEI Committee to improve compositional diversity in the SIPA faculty and lead faculty efforts to further SIPA’s other DEI objectives.** This would include reviewing and, if needed, developing criteria and rubrics for faculty searches and promotions, and improving the work environment for adjunct faculty, in collaboration with a new DEI dean or director. The subcommittee could also work with the Executive Committee and the Committee on Instruction to develop areas of teaching and research that would further greater diversity in SIPA’s faculty, as well as other DEI objectives, in light of policies and practices in place at peer and other schools and universities.

- **Continue the internal DEI review of the SIPA curriculum, develop DEI guidelines for SIPA courses, and support new courses under the Dean’s successful Adjunct Diversity Initiative.** We commend Associate Dean Hazel May’s ongoing review of SIPA’s core curriculum, and the steps already taken by directors of the various concentrations, specializations and other programs to strengthen the attention to racial and other social justice issues in their courses. We encourage Dean May to continue these initiatives in collaboration with the Committee on Instruction, and would be happy to work with her to identify possible DEI guidelines and resources to support these efforts. We recommend that all programs report regularly on the progress they are making to strengthen their attention to DEI issues. We also hope that additional new courses can be developed under the Adjunct Diversity Initiative.

- **Review recent DEI and inclusive teaching workshops for faculty, staff and students, and identify priority topics and promising approaches for future workshops.** For several years, OSA has integrated DEI in the orientation program for new students, and the Office of Academic Affairs, the Diversity Committee and the student organization RISE recently sponsored workshops for faculty on inclusive teaching, identity, unconscious bias and anti-racism in the classroom. The climate surveys and focus groups included in this DEI assessment confirm the need for well-designed and interactive DEI capacity building activities for all segments of the SIPA community going forward. Ideally these activities would be coordinated by a new DEI dean or director. As a first step, we recommend reviewing the recent DEI workshops for faculty, staff and students to identify strengths and weaknesses and inform the next phase of DEI capacity building activities.

- **Request heads of SIPA offices to review relevant recommendations in the DEI consultants’ report and identify appropriate action items for the coming school year.** Iere Strategies’ recommendations – summarized in the attached annex – span areas of responsibility including Academic Affairs, Admissions and Financial Aid, Alumni Affairs, Career Services, Communications and External Relations, Development, Human Resources and Student Affairs. To advance a “one SIPA approach” to DEI, it would be important for each office to build on the DEI self-assessments that many of them conducted in late 2020 and to identify practical steps they can take to further promote DEI in the coming year. Ideally these steps would be included in a school-wide DEI action plan coordinated and monitored by a new DEI dean or director.

Thank you again for your commitment to DEI at SIPA, and for your leadership in initiating and supporting this DEI assessment as well as other DEI initiatives. We look forward to supporting SIPA’s next steps in becoming more diverse, equitable and inclusive.

Att: Annex (Summary of DEI Consultants’ Recommendations)
Iere Strategies DEI Audit Report (separate document)

cc: Wolfram Schlenker, Incoming Vice Dean for Academic Affairs
DEI Steering Committee Members:

Selena Batchily	Prof. Michael A. Nutter
Prof. Steven A. Cohen	Tenzin Dawa Thargay
Leslie Conner Warren	Senior Associate Dean Colleen Toomey
Senior Assistant Dean Urbano Garza	Jason West
Executive Director Grace Han	Prof. Keren Yarhi-Milo

DEI Assessment Recommendations

Recommendations	Responsible Offices (proposed)
<i>Leadership and Organization</i>	
Hire a Dean (or Director) for DEI and Community Engagement (DEI-CE) to coordinate, monitor and report on SIPA's DEI agenda	SIPA leadership, in consultation with restructured Diversity Committee
Restructure and rebrand the Diversity Committee to include representatives of senior administration, full-time and adjunct faculty, officers of administration and staff, students and alumni; rebranded "DEI Committee" would subsume work of the DEI Steering Committee and be tasked with oversight of SIPA's DEI agenda	SIPA leadership, consulting with Diversity Committee chair and current members
Arrange DEI training/professional development for senior leadership and administrators	Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Demystify the "14 th floor" and model accessibility, approachability and inclusion	SIPA leadership
Improve budget transparency, especially related to financial aid	SIPA leadership
Include fundraising for DEI initiatives in current capital campaign	Development
Implement recommendations from recent review of the Office of Career Services	SIPA leadership, coordinating with Career Services
Improve awareness of procedures for reporting bias and discrimination, and post annual report on complaint filings on SIPA website (e.g., on DEI webpage)	Dean/Director for DEI-CE, consulting with Human Resources
Support minority-owned businesses, especially in Harlem, through procurement contracts; explore partnerships with local schools and other local institutions	SIPA leadership, coordinating with SIPA offices and programs (procurement); Dean/Director for DEI-CE (exploring partnerships)
Augment SIPA website for greater accessibility (e.g., closed captioning of videos, translation of content into other official UN languages, more information on disability support provided by SIPA)	Communications/External Relations
Establish a diverse, multi-constituent focus group to vet official statements on national or international crises	SIPA leadership, coordinating with Communications/External Relations
Consider initiating and leading a DEI consortium of peer schools of international affairs and public policy	SIPA leadership
Issue an annual DEI report card	Dean/Director for DEI-CE
<i>Faculty Diversity and Inclusion</i>	
Establish diversity-focused post-doctoral fellowships	SIPA leadership, consulting with Executive Committee
Develop a DEI rubric for faculty searches	Vice Dean and Human Resources, with input from Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Include a DEI advisor on each search committee and provide DEI training to these advisors (ideally senior faculty)	Vice Dean (search committee assignments) and Dean/Director for DEI-CE (training)

Expand student involvement in faculty searches and communicate this practice to students	Vice Dean, consulting with Executive Committee and Student Affairs
Require applicants for faculty positions and candidates for promotion to include a diversity statement in their dossier	Vice Dean, consulting with Executive Committee and Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Arrange tailored, interactive DEI training/professional development (including efficacy assessments) for all teaching faculty on a rotating basis	Dean/Director for DEI-CE, consulting with Vice Dean and Academic Affairs
Integrate adjunct faculty to a greater extent in the SIPA community; provide them with access to DEI training and resources	Vice Dean, consulting with Academic Affairs (integration) and Dean/Director for DEI-CE (training)
Curriculum and Teaching Methods	
Offer more courses that address DEI issues, including core courses	Vice Dean and Academic Affairs, consulting with Committee on Instruction (COI) and program directors
Develop DEI standards for SIPA courses; promote the <i>Guide for Inclusive Teaching at Columbia</i> and other inclusive teaching resources	Academic Affairs, consulting with COI and Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Conduct a DEI audit of the SIPA curriculum	Academic Affairs, consulting with COI, program directors and Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Acknowledge and reward DEI innovations in faculty research and teaching	Academic Affairs
Include appropriate DEI and classroom climate questions in course evaluations	Academic Affairs, consulting with COI and Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Create a repository for faculty to easily share DEI practices and resources	Academic Affairs, consulting with Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Student Recruitment and Financial Aid	
Develop a pipeline program similar to peers, partnering with minority-serving institutions (MSIs) including colleges, universities and public agencies in the NYC area	Admissions/Financial Aid (AFA), consulting with Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Increase need-based financial aid (e.g., through DEI fellowships and partnerships with MSIs)	SIPA leadership, coordinating with Development and AFA
Continue waiving the GRE as an admissions requirement and use quantitative coursework as a proxy for quantitative competency	AFA, consulting with Vice Dean and Academic Affairs
Expand bases for granting fee waivers and simplify the process	AFA
Diversify the Admissions Ambassadors pool to include URM students	AFA, coordinating with Student Affairs
Consider making a special commitment to undocumented students (similar to program supporting displaced students in which SIPA already participates)	SIPA leadership, consulting with AFA and Student Affairs
Include current students in the application review process	AFA
Student Experience	
Increase resources for the Office of Student Affairs and funding to student affinity groups	SIPA leadership

Create a formal mentorship program for URM students	Student Affairs, consulting with Dean/Director for DEI-CE and faculty/staff mentors
Establish DEI fellowships (student DEI fellows would support the new Dean/Director for DEI-CE)	SIPA leadership, coordinating with Development and Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Provide greater support to international students through the Office of Career Services	Career Services
Provide more co-curricular opportunities for students to engage in thoughtful discussions of race, gender and other issues	Student Affairs, consulting with DEI Committee, Dean/Director for DEI-CE and student organizations
Support SIPA students in initiating and leading a DEI consortium with students in other peer schools of international affairs and public policy	Student Affairs, consulting with DEI Committee, Dean/Director for DEI-CE and student organizations
Staff Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	
Conduct a DEI audit of staff hiring processes; provide implicit bias training for all staff involved in hiring; include SIPA's DEI commitment in vacancy notices; include DEI questions in interview rubric	Dean/Director for DEI-CE, consulting with Human Resources
Arrange DEI training/professional development (including efficacy assessments) for all staff on a rotating basis	Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Include DEI considerations in staff performance evaluations	Human Resources, consulting with Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Conduct team-building activities and create more opportunities for collaboration across work units	Dean/Director for DEI-CE, collaborating with heads of offices/units
Conduct an annual staff climate assessment	Dean/Director for DEI-CE
Introduce a mechanism to anonymously report misconduct by supervisors, consistent with Columbia's EOAA procedures	Dean/Director for DEI-CE, consulting with Human Resources and EOAA Office
Recognize and reward DEI innovations among staff	Dean/Director for DEI-CE, consulting with heads of offices/units
Alumni Engagement	
Report SIPA's DEI progress to alumni and intentionally engage alumni of color	Alumni Affairs, consulting with Dean/Director for DEI-CE and Alumni Association Board
Create diverse opportunities for alumni to give back to SIPA (in addition to the annual SIPA Gala and Alumni Fund)	Alumni Affairs, consulting with Dean/Director for DEI-CE and Alumni Association Board
Revamp and strengthen the program for alumni mentoring of SIPA students, especially for alumni and students of color (e.g., through alumni affinity groups)	Alumni Affairs and Student Affairs, consulting with Alumni Association Board