February 24, 2016

Dear Friends,

With the spring semester in full swing, I want to again provide an update on our year-long Fulfilling the Promise of Diversity (FPD) community conversation. (You can see my earlier updates here). Before I do so, however, I would first like to respond to the “Open Letter in Solidarity with Reclaim Harvard Law School.”

This letter calls upon HGSE and other schools at Harvard to take steps towards advancing racial justice on our campus. First, let me thank all of those students and alumni who helped to draft this statement or added their names in support of it. As I have said before, the ultimate success of our community conversation depends on the number and diversity of voices that take part, and for that reason, I am grateful that so many of you have taken this opportunity to make yours heard.

I am also thankful that—through the extraordinary work of students, faculty, and staff over the past year and a half—we are in the midst of an important, ongoing effort that speaks to the issues raised in the letter. To cite just a few examples: our faculty spent the lion’s share of a meeting last November exploring how we can collectively do better in responding to instances of identity stereotyping in our classrooms. Following up on this discussion, we created and shared a host of resources and training experiences on building and sustaining a productive and respectful classroom community. Additionally, Janine de Novais, an advanced doctoral student, led a workshop for faculty and teaching teams about how to employ a “brave community” approach to encountering race-related content and moments in the classroom, and a group of faculty (including myself) has been meeting monthly to specifically discuss issues of race and racism.

In addition, we are in the process of developing and providing expanded training on equitable and inclusive practices to our staff, including building the HGSE Diversity and Inclusion Theater Project, an interactive learning experience that will be piloted with staff and ultimately, we hope, expanded to reach the entire HGSE community. Last month, I was delighted to announce the hiring of Tony Jack as an Assistant Professor of Education—Tony’s research focuses on the experiences of low-income youth and students of color at elite universities. I will soon announce three new fellows as part of the Dean’s Postdoctoral Fellowship for Faculty Development, a program supported by the President’s Office that aims to promote the professional readiness of outstanding recent doctoral graduates from diverse backgrounds. And within the next few weeks, we will release the results of the classroom climate survey administered last semester along with tangible next steps on how to address the concerns and take advantage of the learning opportunities it raised.

This is not to say that our work here is finished. We still have much to do in order to honor issues of race, identity, equity, and inclusion more fully throughout our curriculum and campus. I share your
desires for a more diverse faculty—both in terms of their background and their ideas—that can help equip our students with the skills to dismantle systemic racism and other forms of oppression. And, perhaps most importantly, I know there is more to be done in terms of providing support for our own students and faculty.

So I would again thank the students who signed this letter, and I would urge you—just as we have not stopped working on these issues—to not stop making your voice heard. Reading this letter reminds me yet again of the passion, courage, and good will that you all bring to this community. I genuinely hope that you feel the same way about our faculty and administration. This work is difficult, and it will require all of us. But with mutual trust, and with a common vision for where our School should be heading, I have no doubt that we will succeed together.

Here, now, are some other examples of how this conversation has been continuing over the past couple of months since my last update.

**Fulfilling the Promise of Diversity – Recapping Community Learning**

On November 17, Karen Mapp moderated an Askwith Forum entitled “If You Want to Go Fast, Go Alone. If You Want to Go Far, Go Together.” We were honored to be joined by Kaya Henderson, Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools, and Josephine Bias Robinson, Chief of the DC schools’ Office of Family and Public Engagement. Roughly 180 people attended, and over 1,400 have watched the Forum recording, available here.

On November 18, Landon Patterson, Missouri’s first transgender high school homecoming queen, helped us kick off the Out Front! LGBTQ Leaders to Learn From speaker series. More than 2,000 people heard Landon’s inspiring story in person or online—you can watch a recording of the event yourself here.

On November 19, Fernando Reimers—alongside Diane Moore, a Senior Lecturer on Religious Studies and Education at the Divinity School, and Ali Asani, the Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures at FAS—asked the question, “Religion and Education: Do They Mix?” This dialogue was organized by the Courageous Conversations student group.

On December 1, Paola Uccelli wrapped up the fall slate of the Fulfilling the Promise of Diversity Faculty Series with a session entitled, “Understanding Self and Others: Language, Stories, and Identities.” Her talk, which examined the importance and impact of language on perception, was a lynchpin in the second step in our arc of learning for the year.

**January Term** ran from January 4 to 24 and included a number of offerings related to diversity and inclusion, from credit bearing courses such as A-011P: The Promise of Diversity: Emerging-Research Seminar taught by Toddy Pittinsky, T-21021A: Dimensions of Diversity: English Language Learners taught by Shireen Al-Adeimi, and A-111R Elements of Effective
Family-School Partnerships taught by Karen Mapp to mini-course “Special Topics Seminars,” including STS-71: Implications of Immigration on Mental Health: The Case Example of the Korean American Community taught by Josephine Kim, STS-60: Cultural (In)Competence: Dealing with Cultural (Mis)Understanding taught by Bruno della Chiesa, and STS-74 Silence and Resistance in the Classroom: On the Teacher-Student Dichotomy taught by Houman Harouni.

On January 23 and 24, more than 50 members of the HGSE community attended the “Undoing Racism Workshop.” The event was facilitated by Paul Marcus and Donna Bivens of Community Change, Inc. The first day focused on laying a foundation of understanding around the concepts of racism, microaggressions, white privilege, and racially discriminatory policies, and the second day applied these concepts directly to our work here at HGSE. Participants in the workshop are now working with deans and OSA on reviewing and addressing the recommendations developed by participants.

On January 27, Danielle Allen, Professor of Education and Government as well as the Director of Harvard’s Safra Center for Ethics, moved the FPD Faculty series into the “Building Strong Learning Communities for Equity” phase of our arc of learning with her session “Toward a Connected Society.” Danielle explored the demographic transitions taking place in our country and argued that a more connected society is key to a more egalitarian future. You can watch a recording of her talk here.

On February 1, we hosted a star-studded Askwith Forum entitled “The American Dream in Crisis: Can Education Restore Social Mobility?” The event featured Robert Putnam, the Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy at HKS, as speaker; Roland Fryer and Meira Levinson as discussants; and Paul Reville as moderator. The crowd overflowed Askwith Hall, so if you didn’t get a chance to watch in person, the recording is available here.

On February 6, students braved the aftermath of a snowstorm to participate in the 2016 HGSE Social Justice Workshops. Topics for the all-day conference included gender equity in education, social injustice through the lens of disability, Muslim youth voices, and how HGSE can teach issues of race. A full agenda, and information on presenters, is available on the group’s Facebook page.

A new initiative this semester is the “Faculty Tea” series. These events offer students an opportunity to engage with black faculty members and learn about their paths through academia, the unique challenges they have faced, and how they found success at an elite institution. My thanks to Ola Friday for organizing these events and Pamela Mason, Bridget Terry Long, and Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot for volunteering to share their stories. Stay tuned to the FPD Events Calendar for information on future sessions.
On February 19, Meira Levinson continued the FPD Faculty Series with a lecture entitled “Policing the Boundaries of Discourse and Action: From Political Culture to Classroom Culture and Back Again.” In her session, Meira explored today’s political discourse in the United States and its implications for educating a citizenry committed to equity and justice. The recording of this session will soon be available here.

**Upcoming Opportunities for Learning and Growth: Please Join the Conversation!**

On February 25, the HGSE Black Student Union will host a “Celebration of Talent” as a way to cap off Black History Month. The event will run from 8-10:30pm in the Gutman Conference Center. Go here to add this event to your calendar.

On February 27, Lynette Tannis, HGSE Ed.M. ’10 and Ed.D.’13, will facilitate a session entitled, “Educating Incarcerated Youth: Exploring the Impact of Relationships, Expectations, Resources and Accountability.” Participants will have the opportunity to examine their own work as practitioners, policy makers, and/or researchers as we explore the four themes – relationships, expectations, resources, and accountability and their impact on education for incarcerated youth. This event will be from 1-4pm in the Gutman Conference Center. Go here to sign-up. Go here to add it to your calendar.

The **Deliberate Discussions on Diversity series** will resume in the spring semester. This series features facilitated round-table discussions on issues of diversity and seeks ways to foster awareness, compassion, and connection. Sessions will take place on March 11 (covering the Implicit Association Test, bias awareness, and being an ally) and April 15 (“Can We Talk About Class?). Contact Laura Arena for more information.

On Wednesday March 2, 2016, **HGSE will host the “Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline” conference**, an event sponsored by the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Massachusetts. The conference will welcome civil rights advocates, educators, students, and school and health services providers. Conference speakers will include Carmen Ortiz, United States Attorney, and Stephen Spaloss, Regional Vice President for City Year.

The **14th annual Alumni of Color Conference** will take place from March 3 to March 5. The theme of this year’s conference is **“Educators as Architects: Building a Mosaic for Democracy Now!”** The AOCCE begins with a kick-off celebration on Thursday evening and continues on Friday with panels and workshops during the day and a special Askwith Forum featuring Alejandra Y. Castillo, the National Director of the US Department of Commerce’s Minority Business Development Agency that night. The conference concludes with additional sessions Saturday and an evening reception. You can find a detailed schedule and register on the [AOCCE website](#).
On March 7, from 12-1:30pm in Larsen G08, Andres Alonso will deliver the penultimate community-wide class session in our FPD Faculty Series. His talk, entitled “Promise, Opportunity, and the Challenge of System,” will contribute to the Building Strong Learning Communities for Equity piece of our community's arc of learning. Go here to add to your calendar. Bob Kegan and Lisa Lahey will lead the final session of the year on April 15 from 12-3pm—they will draw from their extensive work on Immunity to Change to contribute to the “Sustaining Ourselves in the Work” piece of our arc of learning. Go here to add it to your calendar.

The “How Are You?” monthly tea and coffee breaks continue on March 10. Speaking of sustaining yourselves, take this opportunity to unwind and connect with your classmates and colleagues. My thanks to Josephine Kim for launching this series. Go here to add these events to your calendar.

On Monday, March 7, we will resume the Monday Night REMIX series. These events are meant to explore life and ideas at the intersection of art, culture, society, and education. Upcoming sessions will take place on March 21, April 4, and April 18. Stay tuned to the FPD events calendar for more information.

I am delighted that we will welcome Jason Young, founder and CEO of mindblownlabs and founder of Hidden Genius Project, which “trains and mentors black male youth in technology creation, entrepreneurship, and leadership skills to transform their lives and communities.” Jason will be at HGSE on Monday, March 21 for a schoolwide event on promoting diversity in the tech industry at 12pm and an informal seminar on entrepreneurship at 4pm for TIE and other students.

The Diversity Dialogues series continues on March 24 from 5-6:30pm in the Gutman Gallery. Roberto Gonzales will talk about his new book Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America. Go here to add to your calendar. Other Diversity Dialogues, to be scheduled, include LGBTQ Teachers Navigating Careers in K-12: Coming Out and Being an Ally and Radical Self-care for Social Justice Activists: Taking Care of Ourselves in Order to Care for Others. Check back with the FPD Events Calendar for more information as it becomes available.

On March 31 and April 1, Richard Rothstein, Research Associate at the Economic Policy Institute and Visiting Scholar at HGSE will offer a two-part Special Topics Seminar entitled, “De Jure!! How Our Amnesia About Segregation Hobbles Our Efforts to Combat It.” This series will investigate the powerful role played by federal, state, and local governments in purposely segregating communities. Go here to sign-up. Go here to add them to your calendar.
On April 8, HGSE will host “Towards 2030: Innovative Policies and Practices for Disability,” a symposium that will discuss reforms and practices to advance opportunities and demystify disability in order to achieve full and productive inclusion in education. The event will run from 12-4pm in Askwith Hall. Go here to add it to your calendar.

On April 13, Matt Miller will moderate an Askwith Forum entitled “With This Ring: Winning Marriage Equality.” The panel includes Julie Goodridge, an HGSE alumna and the lead plaintiff in Goodridge v. Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health, the case that secured marriage rights for same sex couples in Massachusetts; Timothy McCarthy, Director of the Sexuality, Gender, and Human Rights Program at HKS’ Carr Center for Human Rights Policy; and, Marc Solomon, the former National Campaign Director of Freedom to Marry, and the author of Winning Marriage: The Inside Story of How Same-Sex Couples Took on the Politicians and Pundits—and Won. Go here to add it to your calendar.

I hope to see many of you at these events, and my sincere thanks to all of those members of our community who have been working hard to make them happen. As always, if you have questions, ideas, comments, or criticisms, please do not hesitate to share them with me or my colleague Matt Miller, the Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching, at learning@gse.harvard.edu. I look forward to updating you all again soon.

Best,
Jim

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