

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Report, May 2019

Introduction

This report is designed to give both insight and to lead a continued charge on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at The LBJ School of Public Affairs. Students believe it is critical for the administration and faculty to take greater responsibility for DEI issues at our school.

On March 29 and 30, students at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School invited students from six public affairs institutions across the country to talk about the DEI issues at an inaugural retreat on Equity in Policy Education. Shared challenges and feasible action-items were discussed to improve policy education. All institutions reported low numbers of diverse student populations at their institutions. Here diverse is noted as ethnic, racial, disabled, LGBTQIA and low socioeconomic. In March 2019, ahead of the retreat, 33 students (19 MPAff and 16 MGPS) took an optional survey. The survey collected perspectives from students in three sectors: student experience, curriculum, and faculty hiring. Italicized text are unedited quotes directly from current students. Quotes are used to affirm current DEI initiatives and boost new work.

At the retreat, we found students from underrepresented groups (ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, international, disabled, LGBTQIA+) all face similar challenges at their institutions, including financial insecurity, microaggressions, and social exclusion. Lastly, we found at all institutions there are students tasked with changing their institution, doing unpaid, voluntary work.

We came to graduate school to address complex social problems. Public policy in domestic and international affairs is a place where issues of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion all converge. Without a consistent focus on DEI, students graduate without the skills to understand how policy decisions impact communities differently, and to ensure that they do not recreate the same injustices they are meant to solve.

Sincerely,

Elisa Santana, First-Year Diversity and Inclusion Student Representative

Renee Gadsden, Second-Year Diversity and Inclusion Student Representative

Jade Vasquez, Public Affairs Alliance for Communities of Color co-chair

Wayne Holstine, Pride Policy Alliance co-chair

Theo Adams, Pride Policy Alliance co-chair and GPAC Community Engagement Director

Emily Brehob, Pride Policy Alliance co-chair

Lindsey Harbison, Feminist Policy Alliance co-chair

Admissions

The application and admittance process are the first time a student experiences interaction with our institution. Student recruitment and funding can fundamentally impact an institution's ability to meet their DEI goals. In an era when student loan debt in the U.S. is \$1.5 trillion, graduate schools preparing students for careers in public service need to continue to focus on funding their students. We support funding need-based students and adding additional fellowship funding.

Funding

How is The LBJ School ensuring that financial aid prioritizes need and is equitably distributed to students from marginalized groups?

- Students at the conference who met regarding the admissions process at their respective institutions reported that lack of funding was a major reason in declining admission
- At Michigan's Ford, if parents make less than \$65,000, they receive full tuition
- At Princeton's WWS, all students receive full funding and a stipend that varies by need.
- Teaching, Graduate, and Research Assistantships can help offset the price of tuition, but in most schools, stipends are very low or are nonexistent, making it impossible for graduate students to pay their monthly expenses.
- At Michigan's Ford, Teaching Assistants are unionized and receive a sizeable stipend. At UT, TAs, GAs, and GRAs can make as little as \$12/hr, a low amount in relation to Austin's cost of living. The UT Graduate is currently conducting a study on GRA compensation.

Recommendation:

- Re-evaluate how the needs portion of "need and merit-based funding" is evaluated
 - Asides FAFSA information and voluntary information given in a student's statement of purpose, where does the LBJ School give students the space to present their socioeconomic situation
 - Ideas other public policy schools have implemented are additional essays for funding or a transparent opportunity for all students to make a case for their socioeconomic needs
- The process by which Admissions assesses these kinds of scholarships should be formalized and transparent
- For instance, the assessment process can be outlined along with either the number of students funded or the amount of aid distributed combined
- We affirm the decision to include healthcare in the costs of tuition, so students can make a more informed decision between schools' financial packages
- Demand UT Austin increase their stipends to student workers that accurately reflect the cost of living in Austin. A one-bedroom apartment in this city currently ranges between

\$1,100 to \$1,500 per month. Graduate students at the very least should be making \$15 per hour

- Provide information on government resources for low-income students, including info-sheets on Medicaid, rent waivers, etc.
- Create an LBJ School Emergency Fund. Currently, through the Dean of Students' Office, UT offers students between \$25 to \$150 for emergency situations where students cannot afford to pay. For example: medication, bills, replace items lost to a disaster, for safety concerns (like changing the locks). The process for such a low dollar amount of money is invasive, asking for current bank statement, bills, invoices, your Austin Energy bill, a copy of your What I Owe page, and other financial information (See here: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/studentemergencyfund.php>). LBJ Students have the Barbara Jordan Professional Development Fund (BJPDF), but no fund for students who face emergency situations. We do foresee an application process, however, one that does not require such a cumbersome bureaucratic process.

Student Recruitment

How is the LBJ School actively recruiting students from underrepresented groups?

- As mentioned, all institutions reported low numbers of diverse student populations at their institutions. Here diverse is noted as ethnic, racial, disabled, LGBTQIA
- Especially within the LBJ School's MPAff program, the lack of diversity in the classroom is apparent. Here we are referring to the low number of nonwhite students
- We also found institutions look to build a pipeline of students from its undergraduate population instead of recruiting from Capitol Hill, HBCUs, nonprofits, and other professional organizations. While a pipeline program from UT's undergraduate schools is a natural step a large public university would make, you need to build a pipeline and recruit from places where diverse young professional candidates are.

“Attempt to get different mindsets (conservative, liberal, economic right/left, atheist, religious etc.) in a class. Real world is messy, and a class should somewhat be representative of that.”

“There is so much good that can come out of this program, but I strongly fear that LBJ is becoming/has become a place where only a very particular type of student can succeed, which is not what the spirit of public service is about. I am heartened to have received this survey and hope to see some change come out of it.”

““The student body is extremely white, and the dominant narrative within the classroom largely reflects this reality. Students of color (and, to some extent, women, queer folks, and others who are underrepresented in the current power structure) are expected to

raise issues and fight for their own inclusion rather than being included and uplifted by default, which is incredibly frustrating.”

Recommendation:

- The LBJ School needs to recruit from Capitol Hill, organizations like the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, Congressional Black Caucus, Tri-Caucus Organizations, LGBT Congressional Staff Association, and Women’s Congressional Staff Association are places where networks of diverse young professionals already exist. In addition, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities can be tapped. We acknowledge that initiatives in this direction were begun in 2018 and we support continued and expanded efforts
- We need to match our recruitment efforts to the opportunities we can offer students
- This recommendation is made to echo and further expand the work Dr. DeFrancesco Soto, Dean Weaver, and the D&I Faculty Committee does. We know they are pursuing student recruitment from new avenues, however, we ask the administration to support these efforts through more strategic fellowship funding and mentoring opportunities to ensure this recruitment effort is backed by a supportive environment that sets up students for success once they are at LBJ.
- In addition, there are seven faculty members on the D&I committee, who have worked to create change at the LBJ School. We need more faculty buying-in and supporting the pursuit of a diverse student body. How often do professors travel to Washington? How can their conferences and trips be combined to assist Dr. DeFrancesco Soto and Dean Weaver’s objectives? A diverse student population does not just benefit those students, **it positively affects all students and faculty** in the classroom and on our campus
- Finally, two institutions at the retreat mentioned they offer peer to peer mentoring through student organizations, where a potential student can be paired with a current graduate student and walk through the application process together. The LBJ School could offer mentorship programs through its diverse student organizations. However, we recommend this with the acknowledgment that again, this puts additional voluntary work on students instead of on administration and faculty. We suggest that the school engage LBJ alumni in this work.
- For example, the Michigan Ford’s School website: “Interested in applying to the Ford School MPP or MPA program? We are happy to announce the Students of Color in Public Policy (SCPP) Pipeline Initiative. The program pairs prospective applicants with current students who act as mentors providing guidance during the application process. If you would like to participate apply no later than December 1st. For more details please visit <http://bit.ly/Pipeline2014>.”

Usage of Diverse LBJ Students in Media

Recently the LBJ School participated in UT's 40 for 40 event, where \$120,000 was donated to the school. The school used an image of a Black alumnus on their LinkedIn advertisement, and on the LBJ School Instagram account, 4 out of 5 images used to promote the \$120,000 were of nonwhite students. The LBJ School actively uses the diverse students it does have to promote financial and institutional gains.

“As a white, heterosexual American citizen, my background is overly represented at LBJ. However, our media pictures and recruitment brochures portrayed the LBJ environment as far more diverse than it actually is.”

As student leaders from PAACC, PPA, and FPA, we feel the needs of diverse students are not adequately met in funding, curriculum, faculty hiring, and the student experience. Those sentiments are highlighted in the below sections through further insight and recommendations.

Student Experience

At this point we have students committed and ready to start their experience and degree at the LBJ School. How are administration and faculty working to improve student experience?

- At the retreat, all institutions reported having orientation presentations regarding DEI. However, all also noted the presentations lasted around 60-90 minutes, were optional, and wished that institutions did more
- Students at all institutions reported working on DEI issues within their first-year of their graduate program, while balancing coursework, internship applications, work, and personal life
- Students at both the retreat and at the LBJ School reported being tasked with how to change their institution, instead of the administration tasking themselves
- We cannot move forward on the assumption that diverse students (or faculty) should be burdened with responsibility of championing this or doing all the legwork
- Students from the LBJ School survey mentioned they appreciated the initiative that Dr. DeFrancesco Soto and the D&I Faculty Committee have taken

“One example from Class of 2019's orientation: The one panel that addressed any issues of race / equity / inclusion was scheduled at the end of the day on Friday at the end of orientation. That sent a clear message about the priorities of the administration. Very few students stayed, and many students who just moved to Austin missed an important discussion about the city and the university's historical relationship with the African American community. Would like to see

these kinds of topics better integrated into both the orientation and the core curriculum rather than treated as an optional afterthought.”

“I have friends of color and other sexual or gender identities that don't feel as welcome on campus, but I don't know what else I can do as an ally to help improve that. I think it comes from creating more community on campus, but that seems to be a challenge.”

“Too often conversations at LBJ (both informal and formal, moderated events) about diversity, equity, and inclusion start and end with white feminism, or on topics that directly affect/intersect with students' own experiences. They rarely extend to the kinds of communities who are most often marginalized or left out of major governmental policies, which should be a key part of our experience and education.”

“I think there are good intentions, but again - LBJ is almost entirely an environment of paternalism when it comes to D&I. it puts the burden of real change and real analysis on the few folks of color in there when they're just trying to get by without being singled out as one voice to represent a whole community.”

Recommendation:

- We recommend the DEI portion of orientation remain, but to keep in mind that it should be in a date/time slot where incoming students will attend. We support the LBJ School's move from 2018 to 2019 to make the presentation in a priority timeslot. In addition, we are happy to hear that the 2020 presentation will be allotted more time and a key time slot, as we do feel the DEI portion of orientation should continue to be of priority
- In addition, we recommend the LBJ School block out a day of class where speakers on race, lower socioeconomic backgrounds, LGBTQIA+, and disabilities can come and engage students. We know blocking out of day of class may be unfeasible, so we look forward to the recommendations and initiatives Dr. DeFrancesco Soto brings forward on how we can involve the LBJ Community as a whole
- The goal is to have both DEI included in curriculum and something larger than a 90 minute DEI talk at orientation. Curriculum addresses the skills we need going into policy positions while a larger (expanded orientation if you will) is for students to reflect on themselves, to learn how to have those difficult conversations, and to gain awareness about implicit biases, microaggressions, and other factors that shape the student environment
- We find at the LBJ School that the micro-targeted events and classes are attended and taken by students already familiar with these topics. How are we reaching those who are unfamiliar? Faculty schedules get busy. Student schedules get busy. Administration

schedules get busy. If a time/date is not set out ahead of time, thought put into an event, and if it is not made mandatory, there are a multitude of reasons to not participate

- We understand that this idea has come up before, including last year in the UT Student Senate. The pushback last year was that diversity does not only belong on one day. We agree, however, where does diversity have its place right now in the LBJ School program?

Curriculum

After orientation, students enter the classroom environment. The core curriculum within a public affairs school should not be apolitical, evasive of race, LGBTQIA+ issues, gender, socioeconomics, and international perspective. Instead it embraces the often messy and complex parts of humanity. Core curriculum can shed light on ethics, injustice, amplify voices and perspectives that are otherwise buried, provide skills to build paths forward, and call for reform and accountability in governance.

- At the Equity and Education retreat, students at all six graduate institutions reported core curriculum does little to integrate or include DEI considerations, perspectives, readings, or activities into coursework.
- Students reported being asked to assist with adding DEI related course readings to professor's syllabus, instead of the professor doing the work to find alternative readings, books, and scholars
- This is not a singular observation from one student at one institution.
- MPAff and MGPS students' responses to the following question: Describe the current state of your program's curriculum as it relates to equity and inclusion.

"It doesn't exist."

"Doesn't really exist"

"I feel like the only time I get to discuss equity is when I go to events by the Center for the Study of Race and Democracy. Given that I mostly take classes in social policy, it's disappointing that this content is rarely discussed."

"Relatively nonexistent"

"Solely readings from old white men."

“Very dependent on the class, but generally readings are by white males and are extremely heteronormative and white male-centered in their language.”

“Doesn't seem to be a priority”

We have a diverse body of students, but it's not reflected in the course work

Recommendation:

- Faculty need to address lapses within core courses in both the MPAff and MGPS program. We recommend syllabi be reviewed in a workshop setting, professor-partner pairing ahead of the Fall 2019 school year where the onus is on faculty and administration to facilitate the process, not students.
- The LBJ School is majority female, yet our core course readings are majority male. Assigned course readings reflect the conversations we have in classrooms. It affects the skills and understanding we take to nonprofits think tanks, city government, the state legislature, and the federal government. How are students prepared to work in policy when readings and core courses are not reflective of multiple viewpoints? We recommend DEI intentionally be added into core curriculum.
- Furthermore, we recommend adding a core course regarding ethics and social equity. Students should have skills that encompass personal and social responsibility. While select MPAff Policy Development Courses may cover these themes, we have found that LBJ Students still graduate without a lens for seeing and naming inequity.
 - Personal Responsibility – to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
 - Social Responsibility – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
 - [Michigan's Ford School](#) has a required course on Values, Ethics, and Public Policy: “This is a core course restricted to Ford School students only. This course seeks to make students sensitive to and articulate about the ways in which moral and political values come into play in the American policy process, particularly as they affect non-elected public officials who work in a world shaped by politics. Topics covered include the tensions between ethics and politics, an introduction to various moral theories that figure in **contemporary policy debates**, a consideration of the principal values that animate American politics, and issues and dilemmas in professional ethics. The course addresses issues that affect international as well as U.S. policy and politics.”
- Our classes constantly raise the question: are we more divided now on issues in the U.S.? However, as a core requirement, we do not get into the grit of contemporary policy debates that involve race, equity, socioeconomic status, rights for LGBTQIA+

individuals. In classes focused on thinking, writing, and student participation, we are often told it is good to have mishaps and presentation failures in the classroom, as it helps build skills for the real world. If we never have those difficult conversations and expand our mindset in graduate school, how do we expect to have them in the professional world? We make this recommendation so that LBJ Students can obtain these practical skills needed in public policy environments

Faculty Hiring

- Regarding faculty hiring, students both at the Equity and Education retreat and at the LBJ School wished for more transparency in the faculty recruitment process
- LBJ Students noted they appreciated the diverse hires made for the 2018-2019 school year
- On the next page are responses LBJ Students made regarding faculty and faculty hiring

“Seriously hire more people of color. Professors that look like me matter.”

“More women. More folks of color. More critical race beyond literally one professor.”

“More Asian, African American and Latinx Women professors. Also more professors who are LGBT.”

“Hire faculty who are dedicated to diversity and inclusion. Train current faculty on historic inequality, and how to facilitate inclusion in the classroom.”

“Get more existing faculty on board with diversification of curriculum and course materials.”

“There are a lot of older (generally white male professors) who do not make efforts in terms of diversity, equity, or inclusion. Most conversations I've been involved in have been started and led by students.”

“Black women should be hired”

“I was encouraged by the hiring of Professor Fabregas and I hope the school continues to support the hiring of younger women.”

“More nonwhite faculty members that represent more non majority populations”

“Raissa and Sankaran were great hires!”

“I would like to hear what student input in the hiring process would look like, but generally would like to see more deliberate hiring of people of color and others with voices not currently represented well within LBJ.”

“More professors of color. More professors with non military background.”

Recommendation:

- The hiring process at the LBJ School should prioritize recruitment of and creating a welcoming space for faculty of color, women, LGBTQIA+ communities, and other professors from underrepresented groups. Notably, the LBJ School does not have a single black woman on its faculty.
- We know that other student organizations (GPAC for instance) and students are working towards this goal. This recommendation is made to echo this effort.
- Finally, we recommend you consider hiring an additional DEI support staff to help Dr. DeFrancesco Soto, Dean Weaver, and those taking charge to make the LBJ School a better place and program. Someone to assist with the scheduling, organization, and other administrative work required of these efforts. At minimum, a small GRA position could be made to compensate the work put in by students on behalf of DEI issues.

We sincerely appreciate your time and consideration in reviewing this document. We envision continued contact with student leaders at the LBJ School and public affairs institutions regarding best practices and how to work together. Most importantly, we invite faculty and administration to work with us towards making our institution a place where diversity, equity, and inclusion is a continued priority.