Reiss-Davis
Graduate School
Diversity and Inclusion
Task Force

The Diversity and Inclusion Task Force
Calendar Year Report 2020

The Diversity and Inclusion Task Force (DITF) is a Reiss-Davis Graduate School (RDGS) advisory committee, formed under the charge of the Chancellor's Office, with the intent to engage and advance the institution in its continuous adaptation to values of inclusion and diversity in relation to societal changes. The actions of the committee are carried out through the purview and activities of the committee members via their own positions as stakeholders and their participation in the respective school entities.

2020 held significant achievements by Reiss-Davis Graduate School that went hand in hand with the activities and contributions of the DITF and its members. The internal work of the DITF focused on the refinements of task force goals, increase in meeting frequency, revisions in committee meeting structure, and changes and growth in membership. The external work of the DITF focused on three major tasks: (1) supporting the school's regional accreditation, (2) the integration of multiculturalism and the support of diversity, equity, and inclusion into academic and institutional processes; and (3), the desire to assess and ameliorate the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the social unrest in the United States on the students and the institution at large.

The DITF has existed for nearly four years and has held to its task through many fluctuations of composition and structure. This report is a document of the committee's self-reflection and a celebration of striving and thriving during times of turbulence and crisis.

With kind regards,

Simran Khalsa, MLIS
Chair, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force (DITF)
Los Angeles, March 4, 2021

Contents

Membership

- Nina Ashur, EdD; Founding Chair, May 2017-January 2019
- Belinda McFeeters, PhD; Chair, November 2019-January 2020
- Simran Khalsa, MLIS; Chair, February 2020-Present
- Lourdes Brown, BA
- Adriana Cuestas, PsyD
- Maura Gonzalez-Rivas, MA
- Herson Mojica, PsyD
- Daisy Perez, MA
- Jasmine Reyna, BA
- Jens Schmidt, PhD
- Elizabeth Villaseñor, PsyD
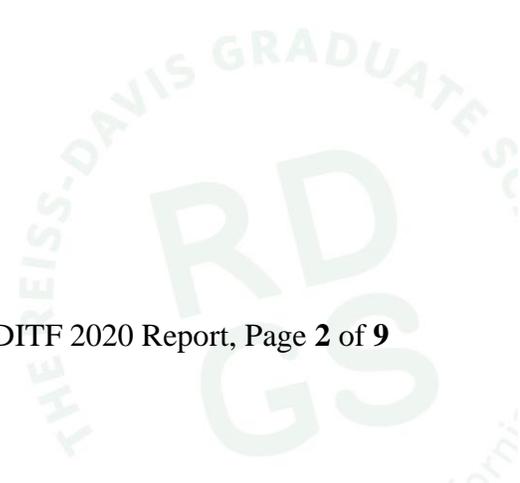
Activities and Achievements

Supporting the WSCUC Accreditation of Reiss-Davis Graduate School
- Accreditation Site Visit 2 Report – Task Force members Lourdes Brown, Simran Khalsa, Belinda McFeeters, and Jens Schmidt significantly contributed to the Site Visit 2 report submitted in January 2020, particularly to segments on diversity demographics and the actions being taken by the school to increase diversity.
- Accreditation Site Visit 2 Committee Meeting - The Task Force met with the WSCUC visit team to discuss RDGS' diversity related initiatives and pathways to furthering the vision of the DITF.

Promoting Student Equity During the Pandemic
- Task Force members participated in group and one-on-one meetings with students to conduct a needs assessment in both summer 2020 and fall/winter 2020/21 regarding the impact of the pandemic on their academic, professional, and personal life.
- Initial findings were presented in summer 2020 to faculty, summarizing student concerns and needs in order to evaluate ways to reduce student burden by reasonably adjusting both institutional and academic expectations.
- A review of best practices adopted by other institutions inspired changes to the institutional workflow aimed at supporting remote learning and teaching.
- Those finding further stirred the creation of the school's *COVID Task Force* in Winter 2020/21 to deploy the institutional portion of a federal CARES Act/HEERF grant based on student needs assessments, with a membership overlap of three individuals on both task forces.

Spearheading the Institution's Acknowledgement of Current Events
- In the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, members of the DITF immediately explored public and institutional reactions and spearheaded the crafting and deployment of an institutional statement of solidarity released by the Chancellor's Office at the time of social unrest.

Infusing a Systemic Understanding of Multiculturalism into the RDGS Curriculum
- Program Learning Outcomes - Member Jens Schmidt, in his role as Dean and as part of the institution's Curriculum Committee, led efforts to define a new program learning outcome (PLO 4) that explicitly addresses professional identity development with a focus on multiculturism, inclusion, and equity as guiding principles.
  The DITF committee assisted in the crafting of PLO 4 and the distinctive emphasis in language of PLO 4a and 4b stating that graduates will:
    - 4a. Recognize themselves as cultural beings, their own intersectionality, and positions of privilege, and acknowledge the impact of past and present structures of power, inequality, and oppression on the individual and on society at large.
    - 4b. (3d) Demonstrate self-reflection and awareness of self and others from a position of cultural humility in all professional activities.
- As of Spring 2020-21, PLO 4 passed through all stages of institutional and stakeholder review and has been adopted for academic year 2021-22.
- Rubrics – Inspired by the DITF, the curriculum committee assured that all courses contain at least one assignment directly assessing for cultural sensitivity.
- Course Work – The DITF continues to propel the implementation of multicultural reflection and work in all curricular courses and program components.

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with Faculty

- Faculty Council Meetings – Faculty DITF members hold space in faculty council meetings to regularly share information and engage faculty in diversity and equity related exercises and discussions.
- Professional Development Newsletter & Events – Elizabeth Villaseñor, the newly appointed Professional Development and Accommodations Director, joined the DITF in fall 2020 with a strong commitment to raising awareness for students with disability and to implement diversity considerations in faculty development and outreach activities.

Diversifying the Student Body

- The admissions pipeline and student lifecycle were modified to engage diversity, equity, and multiculturalism, contributing to the *Strategic Enrollment Management* (SEM) Plan.
  - Marketing - DITF member Lourdes Brown, RDGS's Director of Operations, coordinated marketing and outreach through work with Symphonic Marketing launching the 2020 *Student Recruitment Campaign* in February 2020 to target more diverse segments of the population.
  - DITF member Lourdes Brown also guided RDGS Admissions Counselor, Jasmine Reyna, to issue the first *RDGS-Admissions Newsletter* to prospective students in January 2020 that highlights RDGS inclusion and diversity related initiatives.
  - RDGS admission open house events and presentations highlight the RDGS mission, institutional values, and institutional initiatives focused on inclusion, equity, and diversity.
  - The structured RDGS admissions interview expanded the questions to diversity and inclusion in the new standard interview template.
- As a testimony of successful diversity-focused admission procedures, Cohort H (start date: Fall 2020), turned out to be the institution's largest and most diverse cohort so far in terms of attributes such as race, national background, gender, age, and sexual identity.
- Admissions Counselor Jasmine Reyna joined the DITF in November 2020.

Diversifying Faculty and Staff

- Job Descriptions and Search Requirements – Recruitment efforts for faculty members for new classes focused on candidates that demonstrated an investment in multiculturalism in their professional path and background.
- Interviews – A request for a diversity statement was added to the staff recruitment second interview to help distinguish qualified candidates.

Task Force Self-Work

Identifying and Refining Task Force Goals, Objectives, Initiatives, and Timelines
- The Task force revised its goals and objectives, producing an updated version which translated into a strategic plan framework in Fall 2020.
    - **Goal 1:** Establish best practices to have equitable inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups as part of our students, faculty, staff, and administration.
    - **Goal 2:** Constitute a campus-wide welcoming multicultural, diverse and inclusive community for all stakeholders.
    - **Goal 3:** Integrate a multicultural, diverse and inclusive approach into academic program components.

Recruiting New Task Force Members and Changing Leadership
- The committee started an active recruitment campaign offering RDGS stakeholders to attend committee meetings on a trial basis to see if it would be a good fit of timing, engagement, goals and work.
- The committee recruited its first (non-administration) faculty member(s) to the committee.
- The committee recruited a first student representative to the DITF, making her the first student representative on any RDGS committee.
- The committee transitioned chairs from Belinda McFeeters, EdD, to Simran Khalsa, MLIS, in February 2020.

Changing Meeting Structure and Frequency
- In 2020, the committee engaged in an iterative process that through feedback from committee members sought to balance a sharing process essential to envisioning a steady institutional transformation towards a multicultural, anti-racist institution with the minutia of creating plans, checking in with stakeholders, and reviewing and providing feedback on documents in order to help implement that vision.
- The committee changed the meeting frequency from once a month to every other week to expedite processes of change and to allow committee tasks to be completed during meeting times.
- The structure of meetings was modified to alternate agenda driven meetings with idea generating meetings through reflective process work.

Looking Forward into 2021

The DITF will continue listening to its constituents to identify meaningful and impactful action. It will review the strategic plan to create timelines, action plans, and desired feedback loops to measure progress. It will continue comparing the institutional work to the work being done elsewhere, especially in higher education. And it will strive to encourage the institution to remain nimble in adapting to global, societal, communal, and professional trends and needs.
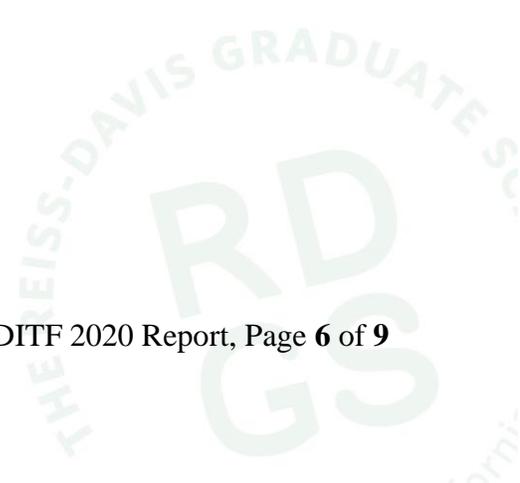
DITF Information

Mission Statement

The Reiss-Davis Graduate School Diversity and Inclusiveness Task Force (DITF) is aligned with the RDGS mission and core values. We are committed to engaging the entire institution in a continuous adaptation of inclusiveness in response to societal changes and diverse trends in higher education.

Proclamation Statement

We proclaim that Reiss Davis Graduate School will be best supported in the pursuit of its mission and vision for the future by a task force that is diverse, inclusive, and focused on equity:

- **Diverse**: We assert that RDGS will be strengthened in its decision making by drawing on the skills, talents, and perspectives of all stakeholders and their diverse viewpoints that come from different life experiences and broad cultural backgrounds.

- **Inclusive:** We promote a culture of inclusiveness that ensures that all stakeholders are represented by bringing their perspectives, identities, and life experience to the institution. An inclusive RDGS culture welcomes and celebrates differences and ensures that all stakeholders are engaged, invested, and take part in sharing responsibility for the organization.

- **Equity-Focused**: We advance awareness of a societal context of inequality and aim at fostering decision processes that best prioritize resources with the goal to provide opportunities to all and avoid unintentional biases that can lead to flawed strategies.

A program of Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services

3200 Motor Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90034 | **Phone:** (310) 204-1666
Fax: (310) 838-279 | **Web:** www.reissdavis.edu

DITF 2020 Report, Page **6** of **9**

Goals – (September 2020 Revision)

Goal 1: Establish best practices to have equitable inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups as part of our students, faculty, staff, and administration.

1.1 Hire more underrepresented faculty and staff, including bilingual faculty and staff.

1.2 Collaborate with marketing to recruit underrepresented students, including reviewing the use of Symphonic Marketing with regard to the ads used to attract students.

1.3 Emphasize diversity and inclusion as integral to plans for institutional improvement of guidelines - in terms of selection, recruitment, and hiring practices for staff, administration and faculty.

Goal 2: Constitute a campus-wide welcoming multicultural, diverse, and inclusive community for all stakeholders.

2.1 Promote diversity visibility and normalization.

2.2 Develop and communicate recommendations to educate the leadership about structural discrimination and inequality, and the need for a variety of cultural perspectives in all institutional activities (from boardroom to classroom) to be present.

2.3 Research and monitor the societal context and standards for diversity and inclusion – review initiatives of diverse organizations and consider how we may collaborate and/or incorporate some of these initiatives.

2.5 Gather information about and report on the state of diversity and inclusion within the school.

Goal 3: Integrate a multicultural, diverse, and inclusive approach into academic program components.

3.1 Review and make recommendations to integrate diversity and inclusion into the school's curriculum; *participate in program review/reform.*

Definitions

Antiracism: The policy or practice of opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance in oneself, in interpersonal interactions, in organizations, in institutions, and in socio-economic structures.

Culture: Integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups.

Cultural Competence: The integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into practices and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of interactions. Having the capacity to function effectively as an individual or an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by individuals and their communities.

Cultural Humility: A lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique of one's own values, beliefs, and cultural identity which is embedded in context from both present and historic realities. It is from that position of contextualized self-awareness that one respectfully approaches the beliefs and cultural identities of others.

Cultural Sensitivity: Being aware that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without making a value judgment on that difference.

Diversity: The practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.

Equity: A process acknowledging unequal starting places, that advantages and barriers exist, which commits to correct and address the imbalances so as to provide everyone access to the same opportunities.

Inclusion: People from different identities feeling and/or being valued, leveraged, and welcomed within a given setting.

Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Multicultural: Reflecting all the intersections of identity, such as race, gender, orientation, ability, economic status, and experience.

Underserved: People not having access to medical/health services. A more appropriate term is under-resourced, but only when talking about services. DITF does not recommended as a blanket term for impoverished communities; recommends removal from plan.

Underrepresented: A subset of a population that holds a smaller percentage within a significant subgroup than the subset holds in the general population. Specific characteristics of an underrepresented group vary depending on the subgroup being considered.

Resources

Banks, J. (1989). Approaches to multicultural curriculum reform. *Trotter Review*, 3(3), 17-19. http://scholarworks.umb.edu/trotter_review/vol3/iss3/5

Banks, J. (2016). Approaches to multicultural curriculum reform. In J. Banks and C. Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (9th Ed.). Wiley.

Bolger, M. (2020, May 24). *What's the difference between diversity, inclusion, and equity?* General Assembly Blog. https://generalassemb.ly/blog/diversity-inclusion-equity-differences-in-meaning/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, October 20). *Cultural Competence in Health and Human Services*. https://npin.cdc.gov/pages/cultural-competence

Coaston, J. (2019, May 28). *The intersectionality wars*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination

Cross, T. L., Bazron, B. J., Dennis, K. W., & Isaacs, M. R. (1989). Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care: A Monograph on Effective Services for Minority Children Who Are Severely Emotionally Disturbed. Georgetown Univ. Child Development Center https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED330171.pdf

DeAngelis, T. (2015). In search of cultural competence. *Monitor on Psychology*, *46*(3), 64. https://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/03/cultural-competence

Harmon, D.A. (2009). *Multicultural Education* [Presentation slides]. Eastern Michigan University. https://www.emich.edu/ugrronlinecourse/docs/URR%20MultiED.pdf

Krathwohl, D. R. (2002). A revision of Bloom's taxonomy: An overview. *Theory into practice*, *41*(4), 212-218. http://cmapspublic2.ihmc.us/rid=1Q2PTM7HL-26LTFBX-9YN8/Krathwohl%202002.pdf

Longley, Robert. (2021, February 7). *What Is Multiculturalism? Definition, Theories, and Examples*. Thought Co. https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-multiculturalism-4689285

Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture. (n.d.). *Being Antiracist*. Retrieved on February 23, 2021. https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist

Sufrin, J. (2019, November 5). *3 Things to Know: Cultural Humility*. Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. https://hogg.utexas.edu/3-things-to-know-cultural-humility

Waters, A., & Asbill, L. (2013). Reflections on cultural humility. *CYF News.* *https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2013/08/cultural-humility*