

Developing Habits of Mind and Heart

**Diversity Plan
to Enhance
Multiculturalism and Inclusion
at Friends**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FRIENDS SCHOOL OF BALTIMORE, INC.
2008

While the implementation of Friends School's diversity program is a shared responsibility among all members of the School community, the Diversity Committee of the Board of Trustees has a particular leadership role. It will seek to ascertain the School's progress as measured against its expressed plans and intentions, and—in consultation with the Diversity Council, the new Diversity Coordinator, and the School's administration, it will consider new directions and ideas as the School moves forward.

The six queries in this plan have been devised by the Diversity Committee to help guide its work, assess the School's progress, and discern whether new strategies will be appropriate.

MISSION AND MEANING

Friends School's centuries-long Quaker tradition of social engagement serves as the driving force behind its commitment, in its Strategic Plan, to enhance campus diversity in all its forms: racial, ethnic, social, cultural, economic, financial, spiritual, and religious. Such an enriched environment, exemplifying the Quaker belief that "there is that of God in everyone," will provide **a transformative educational experience** that develops in students essential habits of mind and heart, shaping their intellectual, ethical and spiritual development while preparing them to thrive in, and help to create, the challenging 21st century world they will encounter beyond the Friends School campus.

REDOUBLING EFFORTS TO ENHANCE FRIENDS SCHOOL'S DIVERSITY

Query 1:

How well is the Friends School community and its constituent groups demonstrating habits of heart, mind, and behavior essential to supporting an inclusive, multicultural environment?

To ensure the continued excellence of a Friends School education, the School's Board of Trustees has affirmed that **enhancing campus diversity—in all its forms—will add significant value and depth to the Friends experience** for everyone in the School community. In such an atmosphere of inclusion and mutual appreciation, students will be better enabled to thrive in, and contribute to, the richly complex and increasingly interdependent world.

Toward this end, the Friends School Board of Trustees formalized the Diversity Committee as a standing Board committee in November 2007. Its mission is to guide and assist the School in its efforts to attract and retain talented and committed faculty, administrators, students and staff who mirror the many aspects of diversity. This committee also works to ensure that daily interactions on the Friends School campus foster mutual understanding and true inclusiveness.

The Diversity Committee was asked to study current diversity at the School and make recommendations for enhancing it. The committee conducted significant research of the U.S. independent schools that are recognized leaders in fostering educational excellence in a multicultural setting. It identified several role models—Greenhill School in Dallas, Texas; the Gordon School in Rhode Island; Sidwell Friends School and Georgetown Day School in Washington, D.C.; and Friends Select School in Philadelphia—and obtained from them extensive information to study. The committee found that these schools excelled

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at communicating with parents and alumni, offered comprehensive cultural competency education, and deliberately included broad cultural perspectives and inclusive content in their curriculums.

In order to examine Friends School's existing efforts to foster a diverse environment, the Diversity Committee reviewed the work of the Diversity Council, studied internal diversity-related statistics, looked at demographic data for the larger community, and considered the School's recruitment and hiring practices. In addition, the committee interviewed faculty, students, and staff to identify issues that both encourage and impede diversity on the School campus, and studied survey data.

After the Diversity Committee made known to the Friends School Board of Trustees the results of this internal and external research, the Board concluded that, although the School's previous efforts and current demographics compare favorably with those of other Baltimore area independent schools, **the School can and should do still more to foster diversity.** The Board has therefore directed that the School pursue a leadership role in enhancing diversity on campus. The process will involve refining and adapting what can be learned from the distinguished independent schools it has identified as models, and creating the School's own initiatives.

DEVELOPING HABITS OF MIND AND HEART

Query 2:

What are the latest best practices or methodologies for curriculum development and educational delivery systems in support of a comprehensive diversity program?

Diversity relates not only to a community's composition, but also to the learning and personal growth that can occur within such a dynamic demographic mix. **True diversity requires both theory and practice, engaging both mind and heart.**

To reap the benefits of a demographically diverse environment, deliberate and continuous efforts must be made to increase sensitivity toward cultural differences. Individuals with different backgrounds and experiences who come together in a welcoming community will become better able to communicate with and understand each other, leading to learning and growth for all. This process, involving both intellectual ('mind') elements and personal, emotional, and spiritual ('heart') elements, should become the norm ('habit') in the Friends School community.

'Habits of mind and heart' include such traits as a willingness to:

- ▶ listen actively
- ▶ engage with people perceived as different
- ▶ share with others in an accepting environment
- ▶ work through perceived or real conflicts around differences
- ▶ be resilient in the face of conflict brought about by differences
- ▶ be open and curious about others
- ▶ assume positive intent
- ▶ recognize growth and celebrate progress.

By encouraging this open approach, Friends School aspires to foster an educational environment in which these attitudes and behaviors are second nature to all within the community.

Increasing Socio-economic Diversity

While it is not fiscally realistic for the School to mirror the socio-economic diversity of the Metropolitan Baltimore area, the Trustees' Strategic Plan has directed that **the School will broaden the student body's socio-economic diversity by increasing financial aid and revising financial aid policies.** The School will necessarily need to augment its fundraising efforts for the endowment in order to increase the amount of available financial aid.

Increasing Racial and Ethnic Diversity by Improving Recruitment Efforts

The School is committed to increasing diversity in all its many forms. To better reflect the population of the Greater Baltimore area, for example, **the Board of Trustees specifically desires to increase the School's representation of African Americans and other persons of color.** This effort will involve the School in developing needed internal skills and structures in support of this goal—competencies that will also enable the School to increase diversity in other areas.

Query 3:

How can the Diversity Committee better support the School's efforts to provide cultural competency education and training?

Increasing International Diversity

Although the Greater Baltimore area is Friends School's first area of comparison for increasing its diversity, **the School recognizes that its students will benefit from the diversity that exists beyond the Baltimore area—especially internationally.** The School will therefore develop strategies for incorporating an international presence on the campus. Whether this can be accomplished through traditional methods or through exchange programs remains to be determined. What is certain, however, is that the cultural competencies the School establishes by first increasing its regional diversity will greatly facilitate its efforts to establish an increased international presence on the campus, further supporting the goal of educating global citizens.

EVERY 'LINK IN THE CHAIN' MUST SUPPORT THE SCHOOL'S DIVERSITY PROGRAM

No simple approach or action will be sufficient in and of itself to achieve the ambitious aims of Friends School's Diversity Plan. Like links in a chain, each part of this effort must be effective in order for the whole program to be strong. The following elements, together with recommendations for their implementation, need to support the Plan.

Curriculum

As the organizing principle of the Friends School experience, the curriculum is the key factor in developing students' habits of mind and heart. By regularly reviewing and enhancing departmental and grade-level curricula, the School's faculty and administrators can ensure students' awareness of the richness and potential of the multi-cultural society in which they live, while also developing an understanding of the experiences and perspectives of other peoples and societies.

Friends School students must interact not only with aspects of diversity to be found in the Greater Baltimore region; they must also be exposed directly to the peoples and cultures beyond this region. This broader reach can be facilitated through real-world and virtual interactions. Technology innovations permit developing and cultivating such relationships, domestically and internationally. Such experiences should be embedded in, and arise from, classroom experiences.

Faculty

All Friends School faculty serve a vital role in modeling for the rest of the School community positive mind-and-heart behaviors, attitudes and habits

Query 4:

In what new and creative ways can the current School community lead the School in locating, hiring, and retaining faculty who provide multicultural perspectives?

Query 5:

What new and creative marketing strategies can Friends School devise in order to attract and support students of diverse backgrounds?

related to diversity. To support the faculty in this regard, the School must involve them in both formal and informal education and training in diversity, including peer and supervisory support.

Because a shortage of well-qualified teachers is projected over the next 20 years, **the School must, in addition to offering highly competitive salaries and benefits, develop creative ways to market itself as an enjoyable and accepting workplace.** Recognizing that its faculty must reflect the diversity of the student body, the School must continue to broaden its recruitment efforts to attract such teachers. Friends alumni of diverse backgrounds who are interested in teaching constitute an important potential recruitment source.

Student Body

The Friends School student body includes a remarkable array of diversity, greatly enhancing the School community. As it moves to enhance diversity, the School must continue to foster its existing open and accepting environment.

Parents

The Parents Association can help develop strategies to support and encourage the parent community in embracing diversity. It needs to assure that parent leadership and participation at Friends mirrors the School's diversity as much as possible, on the Parents Association Board as well as in other parent volunteer roles. Parents Association leaders and other Friends School parents should participate in the School's cultural competency education initiatives.

The Parents Association has already created a new board-level position—a liaison with the Diversity Council—so that these bodies can jointly discern ways in which they can support the School’s diversity efforts.

Administration and Staff

The School’s administration, which hires staff and recruits students, carries a heavy responsibility in assuring the ongoing and increasing presence of diversity on campus. The Head of School must work with administrators and faculty to develop an integrated system for tracking and coordinating diversity initiatives, including developing tools to measure the effectiveness of diversity enhancement initiatives, monitoring progress and making recommendations as needed.

Because fostering diversity is central to Friends School’s mission, the Board of Trustees has authorized the School to develop a new staff position designed to promote the active engagement of all members of the School community in dialogue and action related to diversity, and to deepen constituents’ commitment to, and involvement in, this ongoing work. The Board stressed that **every member of the School’s Quaker-infused community is individually, as well as corporately, responsible for helping to create a welcoming and accepting School atmosphere.**

The School’s staff serve, both formally and informally, as ambassadors and guides to the School’s culture. To assist the staff in this vital role, the School must provide them with thorough and ongoing cultural competency training.

Query 6:

How can Friends School better communicate to the larger community the educational benefits and quality-of-life enhancements that can result from a strong program that fosters diversity and cultural competence?

Diversity Council

Friends School's Diversity Council seeks to unite the School community in initiatives that foster and increase diversity. It also focuses on encouraging an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere at the School.

In its eight-year history, the Diversity Council has had a significant impact on all areas of the School's community life. It crafted a hiring and recruitment policy to increase faculty diversity and developed an exit interview to address retention issues. It provides professional development for Friends School employees, offers a student orientation program, facilitates "kids of color" groups in the Lower and Middle Schools and the Student Diversity Council in the Upper School, sponsors an SAT prep course, and makes recommendations to the School administration regarding diversity-related policy and curricular initiatives. The Council's efforts extend beyond the campus as well by organizing specialized tours of colleges and universities. In addition, the Diversity Council conducts surveys of parents regarding their views about the school's inclusiveness, serves as an open forum for diversity issues, sponsors diversity-related public events, and makes presentations about its work.

A member of the Diversity Council serves on the Board of Trustees Diversity Committee, and the Council includes Trustees as members.

Alumni

In order to strengthen its efforts to improve cultural competency on campus, Friends School must reach out to its alumni of diverse backgrounds and encourage them to share their experiences and suggestions with current administrators, faculty and students. Developing an alumni group focused on aspects of diversity could provide a venue for sharing such information

and could help develop ways to support the School's diversity enhancement efforts. This group could sponsor special campus events to bring diverse alumni back to the campus. In addition, individual alumni can serve as role models for current students, and network with recent alumni as they begin their careers.

Links to the Community

The School needs to cultivate its existing links to the broader community and develop new ones. These links will enhance the School's diversity as well as expose students to people whose cultures and experiences are not always represented on the campus. Such links can also develop useful contacts for recruiting diverse faculty, students, administrators and staff. Outgrowths of these links may also include reciprocal learning and service learning opportunities for students.

NOTES

- ▶ “The Compelling Need for Diversity in Higher Education” EXPERT REPORT OF PATRICIA GURIN. *Gratz, et al. v. Bollinger, et al.*, No. 97-75321 (E.D. Mich.) *Grutter, et al. v. Bollinger, et al.*, U.S. Supreme Court No. 97-75928 (E.D. Mich.)
- ▶ Examples of “desired competencies” include admissions screening; recruitment of students and faculty; retaining students who are already here, ongoing assessment of the internal and external environment to determine future opportunities to expand diversity; identifying trends and new research that will help us integrate diversity in a way that will serve the education of our students; and creating the financial resources to support diversity
- ▶ “Students of color” are students who descend from African-American (Black), Asian, Indian, Hispanic, Native Indian, Middle Eastern or Multi-Racial ancestry. Students “self-identify.”
- ▶ The commitment to diversity at Friends School of Baltimore is in accord with the core Quaker principles of equality, justice, peace and community. From the founding of the Religious Society of Friends in the mid-17th Century, Quakers have recognized the equality of all persons, men and women alike. Since that time, Quakers have been actively involved in many reform movements: abolition of slavery, women's rights, Indian affairs, prison reform, humane treatment of mental illness, equal justice and civil rights. Quakers worked to save Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, were among the first to call for decriminalizing homosexuality and, as

early as the 1960s, were proposing a two-state solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. More recently, members of the Religious Society of Friends have been engaged in conflict resolution initiatives, such as participating in Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraq.

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