

University of Waterloo School of Architecture
Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Task Force

Proposal for Commitments to Change (September 8, 2020)

What follows is a draft document outlining a Proposal for Commitments to Change. The document has been compiled over the past six weeks, gathering feedback from full-time faculty, staff, the Advisory Board, contract faculty, and student members of the Task Force. The consultations were initiated by full-time faculty members in response to both sustained student activism and urgent calls for change, in the belief that they needed to do their own work to develop a plan to address systemic racism. It is now being distributed to all students, full-time, contract faculty, staff, and interested alumni for detailed feedback. It is possible to give detailed anonymous feedback on this document through an online survey which you have been invited to contribute to by e-mail (until September 15, 2020) or through an anonymous feedback and suggestions portal located on the Waterloo Architecture and WA Connect websites, which will continue to be open after that date. In addition, we will be holding a virtual all-school meeting in September with breakout sections for further feedback to the Task Force and Advisory Board in person. The purpose of this document is to get feedback on a set of proposed commitments to be formally considered by the School of Architecture. The intention is to confirm these commitments so we can determine the best process to create a Plan for Implementation and to begin work on this plan. The Task Force currently envisions the creation of a series of subcommittees each formed of different constituencies of the School including faculty, staff, and students over the coming months. These subcommittees would examine the five areas of change described below: 1) School Culture, 2) Curriculum, 3) Hiring, recognition, promotion and admissions, 4) Outreach to university, community, and profession, and 5) Accountability to its constituencies, and the measurement outcomes. These subcommittees would report back over the next few months, so that a Plan for Implementation can be reviewed at the end of the Fall Term. The document is divided in three parts:

1. Context and Preliminary Self-Assessment of the school is a concise introduction to the problems within the school. A more detailed self-assessment will be part of the next steps of this process.
2. Task Force Terms of Reference & Mandate describes the role and powers of the task force, its history and the current composition of the Task Force and Advisory Board.
3. These two first sections frame the Proposal for Commitments to Change, which is divided into five parts. The points in this section are concise, because we want to agree on the areas of change before working to explain how these commitments can be implemented. The plan for implementation will be elaborated once we have confirmation on these proposed commitments.

Racial Equity and Environmental Justice Task Force: Tara Bissett, Adrian Blackwell, Anne Bordeleau (non-voting), Simone Delaney, Jane Hutton, Fiona Lim Tung, Vic Mantha-Blythe, Poorna Patange, Salman Rauf, Emily Stafford.

1. Context and Preliminary Self-Assessment

The Task Force has been formed in response to sustained student activism within the School over a number of years. Student groups such as On Empathy, Treaty Lands, Global Stories and Sustainability Collective, along with many individual students, have been asking for concrete changes to the School to: 1) foreground contemporary and historical Indigenous culture and the legacy of settler colonialism, 2) broaden the curriculum of the School to represent the diversity of its students and broaden all students' education, regardless of background, beyond the western canon and 3) place sustainability as a key priority within all aspects of the School.

Within the sustained uprisings against the police killings of Black and Indigenous people in Canada, the United States and around the world, students and alumni are calling for the dismantling of systemic racism within the University. Faculty and staff have heard the pain, anger and frustration that many members of the school community feel as we face the racial inequity and colonial consciousness that continue to pervade the School. These calls were made forcefully at a meeting including over 150 students, faculty, staff and alumni on June 9, 2020.

The School has long argued that its unique strengths lie in its cultural history program, a rigorous design education that starts from day one, cooperative education, and the Rome program, and that this fosters a strong understanding of the connections between design, culture and history, preparing students for practice, who are mature critical thinkers.

However, since its inception in the late 1960s the School has focused on European culture and history. As a result, the curriculum has

consistently left out other civilizations and cultures and conditioned students in a false sentiment of white European superiority. This Eurocentric orientation is not unique to Waterloo, but Waterloo Architecture's unique emphasis on broad cultural history has exacerbated this tendency. When the School was founded, the long sweep of cultural history was distinct from other schools' narrow focus on purely Architectural History, usually over a limited time span. By comparison to these programs, Waterloo Architecture's curriculum was deeper and well-placed during the rise of architectural postmodernism in the 1970s, with its conservative orientation toward European culture. The Waterloo curriculum overlooked non-white voices from the start, and as the country and the School have diversified, the curriculum has remained largely unchanged.

Studio teaching has similarly emphasized canonical European and Anglo-North American precedents and most studio programs have been written as if white cis-heteropatriarchal and able perspective is the norm. As a result, studio courses often don't reflect the culture and values of the communities of the School's student body. While studio pedagogy emphasizes freedom in research and direction, studios often haven't provided supports for students to engage topics outside of the the faculty's areas of expertise, which rarely extend far beyond the Western canon.

Building Science and environmental courses at the School teach best practices of energy sustainability, but these classes rarely address the intersections between sustainability and racial and economic equity, or the disproportionate allocation of environmental risks and benefits. Most studio and cultural history courses have not addressed issues of climate change and a number of students report studio faculty discouraging sustainability and climate change mitigation strategies if they compromise a perceived "pure" design solution, or emphasize issues not centered in the studio brief, which often do not address sustainability directly. Within the curriculum, there is currently limited opportunity to consider environmentalism through systemic and pluralistic lenses, and aside from the few electives and option studios, there has been little intersection with land-based Indigenous knowledge.

Waterloo Architecture has been slow to achieve the goal of gender parity. The School has still not reached an equal balance of men and women who are full-time faculty members (this ratio is currently 12 men to 8 women) despite woman composing a majority of the student body. This slow transformation has been very challenging for women and non-binary faculty, staff and students, who have felt misrepresented by a majority male faculty. Waterloo has been even slower in diversifying its faculty and staff according to race and ethnicity and it remains predominantly white. The lack of representation of Black, Indigenous and people of colour on the faculty, has created an atmosphere riddled with unconscious bias, that is harmful for Indigenous, Black and students, staff and faculty of colour, and dangerously limits the education of all students. Black, Indigenous and South Asian students continue to be underrepresented in the student body.¹

The cumulative effect of the pedagogical system has been a dominantly white, male, ableist, and straight culture. Over the past five years, through student groups such as On Empathy, Treaty Lands, Global Stories and Sustainability Collective, students have raised issues of equity and sustainability in the School through events, discussion groups, curriculum workshops, installations and exhibitions, written statements to the director and faculty, peer-reviewed publications, and reports and meetings with different levels of the administration, staff and faculty. This sustained advocacy has provoked changes in the lecture series, the way cultural history and studio are taught, and it has brought new guests to the School and provoked the implementation of new courses. However, the pace at which the School has addressed these issues has been too slow, and its scope too narrow, especially given the seriousness of these problems. Full-time faculty recognize that they have a responsibility to act urgently to change the School's culture, curriculum, recruitment practices, hiring and admissions practices, outreach and accountability. They acknowledge their failure to act decisively, and apologize to students and alumni for a history of systemic inequity and the lack of significant transformation.

Architecture is a synthetic discipline which can address a wide range of social concerns, including the interconnectivity of environmental, racial, psychological, and accessibility issues. By identifying these interconnections, and integrating them into the curriculum, it would be possible to critique the ways in which architecture perpetuates exclusions and helps to order an inequitable society and to discover ways to design space more equitably for all people. Architecture as a discipline is well-placed to participate in this process because it focuses on the design of the environment and has amazing power to affect how people see others in both negative and positive ways, as well as to exclude or include specific people. By deeply valuing the approach of people of different identities and the ecological wealth of the planet, we can do much better than reaching equality, we can unlock the full potentials of human and non-human life, to create a flourishing of culture far richer than the narrow one that we have been celebrating.

2. Task Force Terms of Reference and Mandate

¹ The Task Force and Advisory Board have discussed terminology in their discussions and outreach. Within the document we have decided to spell out "Black, Indigenous and people of colour" (rather than use the acronym BIPOC). We discussed using the term "racialized" to describe people of colour, but many of us felt that, while naming the problem, it places people of colour in a passive position. We do not capitalize "white", when it appears so as not to give added power to people with privilege. We see this conversation as evolving in this draft and welcome feedback on the language used.

The Task Force has been formed to identify areas of concerns around equity and environmental justice within the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, as a means to create a concrete plan of action. The project of equity doesn't end at producing a level playing field, but must also examine the systemic disadvantages that underlie formal equality, working to change these as well, by offering specific supports for marginalized students, staff and faculty. As this is a significant effort to transform the School and the School has heard sustained activism from students around issues of systemic racism, environmental justice and decolonization, this Task Force is mandated to act intersectionally to address equity and sustainability issues, while centering these efforts in the project of racial equity. Damage to the health of people and land caused by climate change and environmental degradation is disproportionately borne by Black, Indigenous, people of colour, low-income people, women, 2SLGBTQ+, and persons with disabilities. Only by addressing climate justice in our School, can we meaningfully address equity. The Task Force is mandated to consider these issues specifically within the School, and more broadly in the relation to the university, profession and wider society.

The Task Force is made up of volunteers drawn from the School's faculty and staff, and undergraduate and graduate volunteers confirmed by vote through WASA and a single volunteer from SWAG. In the process of building the Task Force, its composition has changed. It was started by a call to full-time faculty who volunteered to participate (June 4), with the realization that there was an urgent need to address these issues and that it was the faculty's responsibility to do work that students had been doing for years. As consultations began, it became clear that staff and contract faculty should be involved (members were added June 25), and soon after, that students should also be part of the committee (three members were added July 8, one more July 13) and that contract faculty should be better represented (one more member was added July 22).

The Task Force has an Administrative Coordinator and a Communications Coordinator drawn from the full-time faculty and staff, who are responsible for scheduling Task Force meetings, archiving documents, drafting and editing correspondence and announcements. The Task Force meets weekly (with exceptions). Individual meetings are chaired by a rotating Task Force member, and notes are taken by a rotating note taker.

Current Task Force Members: Tara Bissett, Adrian Blackwell (Administrative Coordinator), Anne Bordeleau (non-voting), Simone Delaney, Jane Hutton, Fiona Lim Tung, Vic Mantha-Blythe, Poorna Patange, Salman Rauf, Emily Stafford (Communications Coordinator).

Advisory Board

An Advisory Board was struck to advise to the Task Force. Names were suggested by individual Task Force members and confirmed by Task Force vote, during the second and third week of the Task Force's existence when it was composed of full-time faculty only. Board members were chosen because they had familiarity and experience with the School as either alumni, adjunct faculty, university employees, or were recommended by colleagues at other schools of architecture. They were chosen because they could speak with experience of racism against Black, Indigenous and people of colour, Islamophobia, orientalism, heteronormativity, and ableism. Included in this group were alumni who had spoken out at the school meeting, and founders and key members of student led groups at the School who led activism around these issues for a number of years: On Empathy, Treaty Lands, Global Stories and Sustainability Collective. The Advisory Board meets with the Task Force on a monthly basis.

Current Advisory Board Members: Joyce Barlow, Michelle Fenton, Omar Ferwati, Jaliya Fonseka, KaaSheGaaBaaWeak/Eladia Smoke, Safira Lakhani, Elsa Lam, Camille Mitchell, Paniz Moayeri, William Woodworth/Raweno:kwas, Evan Schilling.

Task Force mandate

- 1) To develop meaningful modes of engagement with the students, staff, faculty and alumni;
- 2) To audit areas in which the School has failed or progressed in addressing racial equity and environmental justice;
- 3) To identify areas of concern that need to be addressed in the recommendations of this task force;
- 4) To recommend a set of commitments to change toward racial equity and environmental justice;
- 5) To coordinate the development of an implementation plan, that identifies concrete steps to realize these commitments;
- 6) To advise on the suggested timeline to implement the plan;
- 7) To advise on a process to monitor progress toward the realization of these commitments.

Both the Task Force and the Advisory Board are advisory bodies. The role of the Advisory Board is to advise the Task Force. All of the Task Force recommendations are subject to vote by Full-time faculty and staff of the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, and, when required, by approval by the Faculty of Engineering and the University of Waterloo.

The Task Force is accountable to the following five constituencies: students, full-time and contract faculty, staff, the University of Waterloo, and its advisory board. The commitment to accountability will be supported by the open circulation of Task Force documents,

inviting written feedback, all-School meetings, and focused work sessions with specific constituencies. The Task Force will work transparently, publishing notes of its meetings and responding directly to suggestions from these groups. It will gather feedback to recommend initiatives for change as well as ways of tracking the progress of these initiatives transparently. The Task Force will work to make recommendations in the following five areas which are elaborated in detail in the Commitments to Change below:

1. School Culture
2. Curriculum
3. Hiring, recognition, promotion and admissions
4. Outreach to university, community, and profession
5. Accountability to its constituencies, and the use of data to measure outcomes.

3. Proposal for Commitments to Change

What follows is a draft of the Proposal for Commitments to Change. This document is in progress. It was developed by the Task Force through consultation with full-time and adjunct faculty, staff, the Advisory Board and the University of Waterloo's Office of Equity. It is now circulated for feedback to all constituencies of the School of Architecture: students, staff and faculty. This feedback will then be collated and distributed back to these constituencies. The Task Force will then engage in consultation with each constituency in order to integrate this feedback into the document to finalize the recommendations of the Task Force.

1) Foster an equitable, diverse, inclusive, accessible and environmentally sustainable School culture for all students, staff and faculty.

1.1) Hold regular fora for student-faculty-staff exchange around issues of equity and climate justice. Take minutes, make these accessible to all voices, and begin each meeting with an update on progress made on issues discussed at the last meeting.

1.2) Support, promote and disseminate the diversity of student and alumni work, and student and alumni work that focuses on equity and climate justice throughout the School and through social media and the website. Encourage and support the production of this work in studios and other classes.

1.3) Support the Musagetes Library to purchase resources that expand the perspectives within the School, bringing marginalized voices, and contemporary issues of advocacy, activism, and sustainability into the collection. Develop ways to ensure students and faculty are aware of these resources and that these issues are covered in the curriculum.

1.4) Participate in anti-racism training available through the university. Schedule training designed specifically for the School of Architecture, faculty, staff and students. Confirm commitment from all faculty and staff to participate in these training sessions. Develop resources and guidance for faculty and staff who do not see how they participate in systemic racism. Build mechanisms for sharing resources amongst faculty, about curricular innovations, teaching methods, and guests that can help increase equity and environmental justice within the School.

1.5) Comprehensively review supports for mental health and wellness in the School, considering what special issues students face in the heavy workload of the architecture curriculum, on a satellite campus distanced from the infrastructures of main campus, and on work terms when supports at the School may be harder to access. Ensure that these supports can better serve Black, Indigenous and people of colour, 2SLGBTQ+, and disabled students. Develop proactive strategies for addressing these issues, so that students can live and work in good health.

1.6) Find ways to better connect students to resources on main campus, by increasing student awareness of existing services, and by working to reduce the time and cost of accessing them. This may be possible through increased remote access.

1.7) Explore funding opportunities on the basis of financial need (i.e. bursaries).

1.8) Develop a clear statement of equity, diversity, inclusivity principles and principles of sustainability to be included in writing in each course outline and voiced by the teaching faculty at the start of every course. Consider ways in which students could give feedback in their implementation in a course evaluation.

1.9) Clearly communicate pathways to report instances of micro-aggressions and other forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, or ableism both within the School of Architecture or through the Equity Office in course outlines, on the school website and in public locations in the school. Make every effort to prevent harmful experiences, so that students will not have to first undergo discomfort or

trauma before reporting the instances.

2) Place social justice and ecological care at the heart of the curriculum.

2.1) Reinvent the cultural history curriculum to comprehensively include the histories and creative works of diverse non-European cultures, while clearly describing histories of colonialism, structural racism, heteronormativity, and environmental destruction and the ways in which architecture and planning are essential technologies of these processes and systems. The Indigenous history of the land on which the School stands, must be integrated as a foundational part of this core curriculum.

2.2) Reinvent the studio curriculum to promote programs and precedents that challenge systemic racism, sexism, ableism, heteronormativity, and ecocide in architectural practice and seek alternative ways of designing our collective environment. Examine the pedagogical structures of studio teaching, such as studio, desk reviews and mid and final reviews, to see how faculty bias might exist within these practices, and change them to create a more equitable studio environment. Encourage the role of studio faculty as facilitators of student interests.

2.3) Extend the work done in 2.1 and 2.2 to examine how we can better emphasize sustainability, accessibility and equity in all curricular streams (landscape and urbanism, technology and environment, and visual and digital media).

2.4) Leverage elective courses to expand the range of cultural perspectives addressed in the School to focus more deeply on specific issues of global, diasporic, marginalized cultures, social and environmental justice and accessibility.

2.5) Reach out to other departments and specialties to see how existing courses which focus on issues of race, colonialism, capitalism, sexual orientation, gender, climate change, sustainability and accessibility can be made available to architecture students. As a satellite campus there is little opportunity for interdisciplinary exploration. This could be addressed through cross-departmental teaching collaborations and exchanges.

2.6) Review the course load and timelines of both undergraduate and graduate programs to see how the heavy workload of the program might adversely affect mental health and wellness and exacerbate inequities.

2.7) Review the grading benchmarks and forms of feedback used at the school. If grading appears low in relation to other programs, or feedback is unclear, this may be contributing to student stress and anxiety and have a detrimental effect on student wellness, access to funding and opportunities for future study.

2.8) Work to develop standards and protocols for reporting of racism, discrimination, harassment, or pay disparities within workplaces during cooperative education terms. These are part of the Waterloo curriculum and students need to be protected on these terms.

2.9) Develop a set of overarching pedagogical objectives related to social and ecological justice to help guide the formation and renewal of the School's curriculum.

3) Increase and support underrepresented identities in the student, staff and faculty complements.

Faculty and Staff

3.1) Invite strong and consistent representation of Black, Indigenous and people of colour within the lecture series in every term.

3.2) Invite strong and consistent representation of Black, Indigenous and people of colour as critics for studio reviews within each term.

3.3) Develop a system through which any teaching faculty can apply for funding to bring Black, Indigenous and people of colour guests into their classes or workshops to provide culturally specific knowledge.

3.4) Develop a set of clear and transparent equity principles for all hiring and advancement of full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, staff and research assistants in order to remove the effects of implicit bias.

3.5) Encourage international visiting faculty and teaching exchanges between schools, to increase Black, Indigenous and people of colour representation in the school.

3.6) Direct future hires of full-time faculty and staff to fill gaps in representation, with the aim of building a faculty and staff complement that reflects the diversity of the student body as faculty and staff retire. Direct future hires to recruit candidates with oral narratives, inherited knowledge, specialization, or expertise in global cultural history and theory, colonialism and racism, sustainability and environmental justice, in order to build and diversify the curriculum.

Admission and Recruitment

3.7) Study the admissions process to understand where it perpetuates, or wards against, implicit bias. Develop protocols for admission based on these findings. Set out clear equity principles and training for all those participating in evaluating candidates at graduate and undergraduate levels in order to address, and work to remove, the effects of implicit bias. The aim of this process is to increase access for underrepresented groups.

3.8) Recruit Black, Indigenous, and people of colour students and students with socio-economic barriers to entry. Develop targeted programs for outreach for underrepresented groups. Use examples of the work of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour students to show prospective candidates what is possible.

3.9) Create awards through a fund or endowment that will increase access for Black, Indigenous, people of colour students and students with socio-economic barriers to entry.

4) Act to change institutions beyond the School

4.1) Engage all levels of the university to see how these efforts toward equity and sustainability can be supported and hold the university accountable to do better in its policies, and programs.

4.2) Work with the City of Cambridge to improve issues of student and citizen safety, equity and environmental justice, to create a more inclusive and sustainable urban environment, without defaulting to policing to do this work.

4.3) Reach out to other faculties and Schools in Canada and internationally to join in initiatives related to equity and environmental justice.

4.4) Reach out to other national and international architectural professional organizations (such as the Ontario Association of Architects, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada) to support, join and advocate for equity and environmental justice initiative within the profession of Architecture.

4.5) Connect with and support non-governmental and non-profit organizations working toward equity, sustainability and accessibility.

5) Accountability, Transparency and Tracking and Reporting on progress towards outcomes

5.1) Develop clear and easily accessible pathways to report instances of micro-aggressions and other forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, or ableism that happen while students are studying, or to staff and faculty when they are at work. Establish a clear set of options for reporting that include: the perpetrator, undergraduate and graduate coordinators, the director of School, and the Waterloo Equity Office. Ensure that these pathways are simple and direct and that actions taken are clear and are clearly conveyed to those who reported them, so that no one is discouraged or dissuaded from reporting.

5.2) Develop a clear set of procedures on the part of the School's administration to record and take action in response to reports of micro-aggressions and other forms of racism in the School and to archive these cases. These procedures must be designed to augment and improve upon existing University policies while closely following the university's current work to improve its own policies.

5.3) Develop a transparent process of accountability that makes the process of this work toward equity and sustainability visible to the School community.

5.4) Encourage and support efforts by the university to collect disaggregated identity-based data for things such as faculty and staff hired and currently working in our School, as well as for students admitted and graduating from our School, and for students receiving awards in order to accurately assess disparities.

5.5) In advance of and in parallel with obtaining quantitative data, develop ways in which the School can make use of existing

qualitative and anecdotal data presented by the student body to guide work toward equity.

5.6) Develop benchmarks to track progress towards these goals, including the assessment of actions taken to date. Develop a schedule to report back to the School on the progress toward these goals at regular intervals.