

JADE AT UIC....

Justice, Access, Diversity and Equity

*This represents a renewed commitment to our principles and mission in hard and trying times. We aspire to be an engaged urban university in service to a larger diverse community and a greater common good. Our mission is to be **just, accessible, diverse** and to promote fair and equal treatment of all groups, communities and individuals beginning with those who have been systematically marginalized, excluded or discriminated against by virtue of their status.*

“The ultimate measure of a man (or woman or institution) is not where he (or she or it) stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he (or she or it) stands in times of challenge and controversy.” --- Martin Luther King Jr.

Purpose and audience

This is an internal document for the UIC community as a starting point for augmenting and reaffirming our commitment to JADE in difficult and changing times. It is the outgrowth most immediately of more than a year of campus-wide dialogue and deliberation, the Diversity and Strategy Thinking Process, which involved hundreds of staff, students and administrators. It is also a continuation of the decades-long effort begun in the 1970s to advance the principles of diversity, equity, access and justice at UIC and to thereby help us realize our mission as a truly public university.

The importance of this initiative at this time

There are external and internal reasons. First of all there has been a steady challenge to diversity efforts at universities across the country, over the past decade, in the form of lawsuits by special interest groups targeting Affirmative Action programs. These Affirmative Action programs, while never flawless, were important door-openers for hundreds of thousands of people from previously excluded groups. The erosion and dilution of these programs at many institutions demands that those of us who still hold the principles of inclusion dear step up and reaffirm our commitment, and back that commitment up with action. Secondly, with progress in some areas, some have suggested that racism, sexism and other forms of systematic discrimination are dead and buried. We wish this were so. However, empirical and anecdotal evidence tells us otherwise. Finally, with budget challenges and structural reorganization at the University of Illinois, we need to be explicit that JADE will not be a casualty of these changes.

The State of JADE at UIC

Any new diversity initiative must be predicated **upon a thorough inventory** of not only existing programs, but also of current statistics and patterns of diversity, broken down by racial and ethnic category, class, gender, sexual orientation and disability status. All interested parties need a thorough status report which will ferret out problems, weaknesses and areas of needed improvement as well as successes that we want to support and replicate. What must undergird the inventory and assessment is twofold: a willingness to be *brutally honest* and self-critical as a first step to growth and rebuilding; and a refusal to collapse all forms of diversity, all groups and categories into one.

Diversity is meaningful in its specificity. There is always diversity of some kind and diversity alone does not represent equity or justice. For example, a department that has 30% women but no people of color is still lacking in terms of diversity. OAE will need to aid in this data collection broken down by groups, by social class, by rank and over time.

Reporting, transparency, and assessment measures should be put in place to ascertain on an ongoing basis where we stand on key questions broken down by key variables. We cannot allow conflation of statistics to mask our weak points. Racial diversity should be broken down by rank in the case of faculty. Students of color should be broken down by their racial/ ethnic groups and by what neighborhoods and high schools they come from which reflects access by socio-economic class. Socio-economic measures should also be in place as well as gender measures. And we need more data on the disability and LGBTQ communities overall. We should also extend diversity monitoring to Civil Service, union, and other areas of employment that often encounter stiff entrance and advancement barriers, in part because of entrenched interests. If these data are already collected, they should be made easily available immediately.

Measuring Progress, Acknowledging Success, Consulting Stakeholders

We need to identify concrete goals, benchmarks, and implementation strategies. First, we should move to preserve, protect and promote existing units that have been doing the heavy lifting on the diversity front for years. Programs with a record of improving JADE that have been reduced should be restored as a starting point. Secondly, we should reinstate ‘impact statements’ to require justification for any changes that might impact diversity. In other words, there should at every level be some **accountability** that no new initiatives, changes, cuts, hires or restructuring will compromise the principles of JADE. Next, any new appointments or job or office creation with regard to diversity should be the result of a deliberative and consultative process involving key stakeholders, units and communities likely to be directly or indirectly affected. Finally, we have to constantly ask what success would look like from the point of view of the major areas of diversity recognized by the Chancellors Committees: race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, and we would add social class as a category that overlaps with all of the others but **cannot stand as a proxy for them.** All employees, including graduate employees, civil service, and union employees, should be a part our diversity initiative.

JADE should be a priority for UIC and a key part of our identity, reflected in structures, resources, practices and climate

A plan and budget for new and ongoing initiatives should be launched to add muscle and meaning to our words and to avoid the danger of cosmetic diversity. Strong leadership and full consultation in the form of a standing committee (including representatives of Chancellor’s committees, via the Network of Diversity-Related Units (NDRU), student and staff representatives, and faculty and staff experts) needs to anchor this process. JADE should become a central part of UIC’s identity, branding, and self-representation. However, this should ONLY occur in tandem with a vigorous and robust plan to make JADE real and meaningful by first confronting the many ways in which we are lacking. Embracing the principles of JADE takes us beyond ‘thin’ notions of diversity and moves

us closer to realizing our mission as a truly engaged public urban university situated within a vibrant, diverse, international city in the State of Illinois.

Investing in JADE related Research and Teaching

The creation of new knowledge through research and the dissemination of that knowledge through teaching is at the very core of our purpose and mission as an institution. Teaching and research are key to our desire to become a leader in the field of diversity (and JADE). Research institutes and projects, departments and programs that support faculty scholarship related to justice, access, diversity and equity related themes have to be supported, affirmed, and highlighted. Faculty of color and those working on JADE issues have to be aggressively recruited and creatively retained in order for our diversity efforts to be truly meaningful and sustainable. Cluster hires, mentoring, signature intellectual programs that hold up JADE are much needed. This may require inventing new initiatives but also requires expanding upon work that is ongoing with reliance on in-house expertise and the units that have been a locus of diversity work for decades.

Cautions and Concerns:

The document, “Through the Lens of Diversity,” is a transcript of a year of ‘thinking’ out loud across the campus. It is, by definition, broad in scope and inclusive of competing notions of diversity. In drawing on various parts of the document it is crucial that we not misread the underlying problems at hand, or fail to define concrete goals. JADE is a set of conceptual priorities extracted from “Through the Lens” and augmented by the input of organized groups of UIC faculty and staff who specialize in various diversity and justice related issues and projects. The following bullet points represent an addendum to JADE and outline a set of concerns and cautions as we go forward in this process. They form a critical addendum, which outlines some of the weaknesses of “Through the Lens of Diversity.”

- Any document produced must be clear about audience and purpose.
- There is a danger in overstating our progress because it weakens the case for what needs to still be done. We do not need public relations documents at this point.
- We must be careful about the language of ‘broad diversity’ and ‘moving beyond conventional thinking’ which runs the risk of de-emphasizing race as a crucial variable for any measure of diversity.
- Any diversity document must reaffirm clearly why diversity is important now.
- UIC should **aspire to become a leader with regard to diversity** and not simply hold the course.
- Diversity needs to always be linked to social justice, access and equity in order to be robust and substantive.
- It is important to move swiftly but no diversity initiative should be enacted without consultation and vetting with key experts and stakeholders.
- LARES, UHP and AAAN and other units with diversity focused missions should have funding restored to continue and improve their work on recruitment and support of students of color.

- There are differences between various under-represented or under-served groups but an emphasis on competition distracts from common goals and needs.
- Use of the language of ‘experiment’ suggests a tentativeness that moves us away from concrete actions and fails to recognize ongoing efforts that do work.
- To stress that no one racial/ethnic group is a majority artificially collapses all people of color together. We still have all white units and some units where major racial minorities are absent.
- It is crucially important to talk about diversity in specific terms. Various marginalized or under-represented groups cannot serve as proxy for others. A unit with women and no people of color or vice versa is still failing at diversity.
- The inventory and assessment of existing efforts at diversity is incomplete and misleading, and needs to be exhaustive.
- Excellence is not linear and not always measured in test scores and ratings.
- As an academic institution we need to emphasize the stellar scholarship and teaching on race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and disability ongoing at UIC and in need of greater support and recognition.
- Any new diversity initiative, or any ongoing projects going forward, should rely on a more collective process focused on in-house expertise.
- There needs to be full consultation with all stakeholders before new offices or posts are established since there are varied positions on what leadership model is needed.
- We need to pay attention to the issue of a campus climate of intolerance, elitism and marginalization. Many still feel ‘left out’ or invisible.
- We need concrete benchmarks for admissions, hiring, retention, and promotion and these need to be backed up with financial and policy commitments.
- **Minority Impact statements** need to be resurrected.
- We have failed our mission if students still graduate having never had a single professor of color.
- There is a dangerous implication that we should ‘treat all students the same’ and fairness will trickle down to those who have been in an unfairly treated group. Recognizing diversity means recognizing that students have diverse needs and abilities. This defies cookie cutter approaches to measuring excellence.
- The diversity of the graduate student teaching staff is sometimes used as a stand-in for lack of faculty diversity. We therefore need more detailed statistics on the diversity of instructional staff at all levels and ranks, including TAs, lecturers, adjunct, visiting, and non-tenure-track faculty, as well as untenured, tenured and full professors. Is the hierarchy color-coded or gendered?
- Quotations should either be vetted or eliminated because some could be misleading.
- The report’s suggestion that support programs might harm students by steering them away from regular programs is misleading. Specialized programs augment mainstream services by providing support they do not.
- In-house experts feel that recent changes threaten to narrow diversity. For example, the ‘removal of ECSP’ and changes in Banner may decrease student awareness of support services. There should be a reconsideration of this decision.