

School of Planning and Public Affairs (SPPA)  
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Plan  
Final version: July 5 2021

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**I. Plan-writing, editing and adoption process**

This draft was prepared by the SPPA DEIJ Committee\* on 10/19/2020. It was submitted for review to all SPPA faculty and staff. A revised version was submitted for comments to URP Advisory Committee and MPA Steering Committee at their Fall 2020 meetings. The plan was then modified in response to the feedback received. On 2/12/2021, faculty, staff and students held a community discussion about Principles of Community. On 3/5/2021, students provided input on the draft plan. The final plan, including the Principles of Community, was adopted by the Faculty, Staff and Student Committee on 4/2/2021. The plan was further revised in response to UI General Counsel’s input in May 2021.

Implementation and assessment criteria and timelines will be revised as needed to be consistent with current and future NASPAA and PAB accreditation standards.

\*The SPPA DEIJ Committee was formed in the Fall of 2020. It currently comprises: SPPA Director (Charles Connerly), two SPPA faculty (Jerry Anthony and Lucie Laurian) and a staff member (Gina Davis). Once Students review the plan in the Spring of 2021, they will be asked to nominate a student representative to serve on the DEIJ Committee.

## II. Land Acknowledgment

This DEI plan cannot start without acknowledging of our institution's debt to the Tribal Nations whose homelands are now occupied by the University of Iowa, and the sovereign tribal Nations who live today in the state of Iowa. We thus open this DEI plan with the University of Iowa's Acknowledgement of Land and Sovereignty:

The University of Iowa is located on the homelands of the Ojibwe/Anishinaabe (Chippewa), Báxoje (Iowa), Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Omāēqnomenēwak (Menominee), Myaamiaki (Miami), Nutachi (Missouri), Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup> (Omaha), Wahzhazhe (Osage), Jiwere (Otoe), Odawaa (Ottawa), Pó<sup>n</sup>ka (Ponca), Bodéwadmi/Neshnabé (Potawatomi), Meskwaki/Nemahahaki/Sakiwaki (Sac and Fox), Dakota/Lakota/Nakoda (Sioux), Sahnish/Nuxbaaga/Nuweta (Three Affiliated Tribes) and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Nations. The following tribal nations, Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup> (Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa), Pó<sup>n</sup>ka (Ponca Tribe of Nebraska), Meskwaki (Sac and Fox of the Mississippi in Iowa), and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska) Nations continue to thrive in the State of Iowa and we continue to acknowledge them. As an academic institution, it is our responsibility to acknowledge the sovereignty and the traditional territories of these tribal nations, and the treaties that were used to remove these tribal nations, and the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution since 1847. Consistent with the University's commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, understanding the historical and current experiences of Native peoples will help inform the work we do; collectively as a university to engage in building relationships through academic scholarship, collaborative partnerships, community service, enrollment and retention efforts acknowledging our past, our present and future Native Nations.

Source: University of Iowa Native American Council

As we write, adopt and implement this DEI plan, we seek to remain aware of the importance and implications of our institution's debt and responsibility towards tribal nations, native students at the University of Iowa, and native communities living in Iowa.

### III. Vision, Mission and Implementation Statements

#### Vision Statement

The School of Planning and Public Affairs (SPPA) will be a transformative educator of city and regional planners and public administrators who will work in the public, private and non-profit sectors. They will shape social, economic, and environmental policies as well as urban and regional development, and impact communities and their built and natural environments.

#### Mission statement

SPPA strives to train a diverse body of future practitioners who will support diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice (understood to include race, economic status, gender, sexuality, and ability), and leverage these strengths in the communities they serve throughout their careers. SPPA recognizes that past and ongoing actions by some federal, state and local agencies and private actors (not specifically the University of Iowa) have led to inequities, injustices, and exclusion of minority and disenfranchised populations in many aspects of civic and personal life, e.g., health, safety, education, housing, transportation, access to social and economic capital, and social-emotional wellbeing. Historic examples include: racial segregation in public schools, hospitals, and swimming pools until the 1950s, the Federal Housing Administration's "redlining" mortgage underwriting policies of the 1930s-50s, race-based restrictive covenants until the 1940s, and the demolition of minority neighborhoods as part of urban renewal and freeways construction projects in the 1950s-60s. SPPA also recognizes that the academic training of planners and policy makers may have at times enabled inequitable practices, e.g., in the areas of transportation, housing or zoning. Thus, SPPA seeks to change Planning and Public Affairs education and practice to address and redress current and past inequalities, and move public service in a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just direction.

#### Diversity and Inclusivity Implementation Statement

SPPA seeks to model diversity, equity, inclusivity, and social justice\* as values and assets in the teaching, research, and service of faculty and staff, and in student learning opportunities. In particular, we aim to ensure DEIJ through student admissions and faculty and staff hiring, through faculty's collective teaching, curriculum, research and service activities, through Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC) course and capstone projects, through service to students and to the professions, and through internal policies, procedures, training and ways-of-doing.

#### SPPA Values Statement

The SPPA is committed to:

- Ethics in public service, and private and non-profit management
- Equitable, inclusive and just policies, procedures and ways-of-doing
- Diversity, equity, inclusivity, and social justice in the outcomes of urban and regional development and in the management of public and nonprofit agencies
- Leadership in leveraging the strengths of diverse, equitable and inclusive communities and organizations to improve policy and practice processes and outcomes

\* We used the term "social justice" to encompass social, environmental, and economic justice.

## IV. Goals and Objectives

### Goal 1. Socio-economic diversity in SPPA's faculty, staff and student bodies

#### **Objective 1.1. SPPA's faculty is socially diverse**

Strategies: We note the gender imbalance (only one female faculty) and the absence of African American, Hispanic and Native American faculty members as of 10/12/2020: With each hire, we seek to recruit the best candidates possible, while also seeking to increase faculty diversity.

Before every recruitment opportunity, the DEIJ Committee will review current demographics to identify gaps. Pre-interview and screening questions will be identical for all candidates. After each hire, the DEIJ Committee will review all process steps to determine whether any step might have had imbalanced impacts on any particular socio-demographic (e.g., reviewing interview process, questions, participants).

Also, in support of this objective, increase social diversity of URP Advisory Board and MPA Steering Committee members.

Criteria: Both SPPA's faculty excellence and diversity increase over time.

Responsibility: All faculty, SPPA DEIJ Committee, Director

Timeline: Reviewed annually in May/June

#### **Objective 1.2. SPPA's staff is socially diverse**

Strategies: Consider socio-demographic impacts of decisions when hiring staff.

Before every hire, the DEIJ Committee will review current demographics to identify gaps. Pre-interview and screening questions will be identical for all candidates. After each hire, the DEIJ Committee will review all process steps to determine whether any step might have had imbalanced impacts on any particular socio-demographic (e.g., reviewing interview process, questions, participants).

Criteria: Both SPPA's staff excellence and diversity increase over time.

Responsibility: SPPA DEIJ Committee, Director

Timeline: Reviewed annually in May/June

**Objective 1.3. Socio-economic diversity of SPPA's student body is at least as diverse as the UI graduate student body**

Strategies:

To provide opportunities for education at SPPA to all possible academically qualified applicants, we seek to build the best and most diverse applicant pool possible.

Actively engage students and recent alumni in recruitment efforts (presentations at almas maters, career fairs, "refer a friend" incentive).

Enhance social media presence and postings to facilitate efforts to "spread the word" widely.

Actively work to ensure all students receive adequate support to maximize success, retention and timely graduation.

Criteria: SPPA students' excellence and diversity increase over time.

Responsibility: SPPA DEIJ Committee, Director, DGS, Admissions coordinator

Timeline: Ongoing, reviewed annually in May/June

**Goal 2. URP and MPA curricula are inclusive, celebrate ways in which diversity and equity have and are being achieved, challenge barriers that stifle or prevent individual growth and advancement, and adopt best practices in training students to develop and apply DEIJ skills**

**Objective 2.1. Core, specialization core, and elective courses in URP and MPA programs include contemporary pedagogy on DEIJ issues, as relevant to each course. The curricula prepare all graduates with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to apply DEIJ concepts and approaches in their careers.**

Strategies: As relevant in their courses, faculty highlight (1) policies and practices that positively and negatively impact disenfranchised communities, (2) analytical skills useful for identifying equitable and inequitable policies, practices and outcomes, (3) and policies and practices to strengthen equity and address inequalities in access to opportunities.

Faculty indicate in their syllabi how relevant DEIJ-related contents are covered, and report to DEIJ Committee.

SPPA DEIJ Committee tracks DEIJ contents in a curriculum matrix, identifies gaps, and reports to faculty meeting so that faculty can decide how best to remedy gaps.

SPPA DEIJ Committee explores possibility asking specific questions on DEIJ content in course evaluations and exit surveys.

Student representatives provide input in curriculum review.

Responsibility: SPPA DEIJ Committee, each individual faculty

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in May/June

**Objective 2.2. IISC capstone and class projects include a focus on the social (DEIJ) dimension of Sustainability.**

Strategies: Recruitment and selection of partner communities, topic/problem identification and definition, and project contents include an explicit DEIJ focus. This can be with regards to the overall project, in specific sections devoted to DEIJ, with DEIJ/minority impact statements, and/or with specific focus on environmental, equity and/or economic opportunity and advancement.

Students are asked to write explicitly about the place of DEIJ throughout their project.

Responsibility: IISC Director, Capstone instructors

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in May/June

**Goal 3. SPPA Space is inclusive**

**Objective 3.1. SPPA space is inclusive and welcoming to all**

Strategies: Identify and address potential DEIJ issues in SPPA space -to the extent possible- including art/visuals, messaging, universal design (drafting room, library, hallway décor, bathrooms, religious practice, lactation rooms).

Add interactive art that supports self-expression in the lobby.

Add local/global maps and international flags in SPPA spaces.

Explore desirability and feasibility of gender-neutral bathroom with UI facilities and SPPA faculty, staff and students.

Issues and improvements should be assessed using the climate survey (see Goal 6.1 below).

Responsibility: Space Committee, DEIJ committee, Director, SPPASA

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in October

**Goal 4. Equity, inclusion and justice in all SPPA's procedures policies, and ways-of-doing**

**Objective 4.1. Ensure that all student-relevant policies (e.g., admissions, funding, grading) follow UI and Graduate College policies.**

Strategy: Review all policies relevant to students for potential SEIJ issues

Increase transparency of student funding decisions.

Include SPPASA representative on DEIJ committee and policy reviews

Responsibility: DEIJ committee, Director, SPPASA

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee, SPPASA in October

**Objective 4.2. Ensure that all faculty-relevant policies (e.g., recruitment, promotion and tenure, compensation) follow UI and Graduate College policies.**

Strategy: Review all policies relevant to faculty for potential SEIJ issues (review faculty manual and update as needed)

Responsibility: DEIJ committee, Director

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in May/June

**Objective 4.3. Ensure that all staff -relevant policies (e.g., hiring, compensation, scheduling) follow UI and Graduate College policies.**

Strategy: Review all policies relevant to staff for potential SEIJ issues

Responsibility: DEIJ committee, Director, Staff members

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in May/June



**Goal 5. Faculty, staff and students adopt and follow Principles of Community (see Appendix)**

Not all interactions and experiences are determined by socio-demographics and formal policies. SPPA will develop a DEIJ Principles of Community that faculty, staff and students agree to, and that will guide behaviors and communications in interactions between and among faculty, students and staff.

**Objective 5.1. SPPA develops and adopts a School-wide Principles of Community that reflects DEIJ priorities with input from students, staff and faculty, URP Advisory Board and MPA Steering Committee.**

Strategies:

DEIJ committee drafts *Principles of Community*, submits it for review to students, faculty and staff, faculty adopts the code

Setup mechanism for informal interventions when Principles of Community are breached and parties prefer not to trigger formal university reviews. This mechanism must include informing all parties of their formal UI grievance rights and procedures, informal meetings with the DEIJ committee, and include non-retaliation guarantees.

Responsibility: DEIJ committee

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee, Steering Committee and Advisory Board in Spring

**Objective 5.2. Review and improve Principles of Community**

Strategy: Faculty and Staff review *Principles of Community* usage and impacts annually using the Climate survey (see Goal 6.1)

Responsibility: DEIJ committee, Director, Faculty and Staff

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in May/June

**Goal 6. Ensure that DEIJ practices are implemented and effective**

**Objective 6.1: Ongoing improvements to policies, strategies, and ways-of-doing are informed by the results of an annual SPPA faculty, staff and student climate survey**

Strategy: SPPA runs an annual climate survey of faculty and staff. Results are analyzed aggregated and disaggregated (by gender, ethnicity, US/immigrant status, sexual orientation, etc.) to reveals strengths and weaknesses from different perspectives and to guide improvements.

Responsibility: DEIJ committee, Director, possibly with assistance from the Human Rights Center

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in May/June

**Objective 6.2: Ongoing improvements to policies, strategies, and ways-of-doing are driven by empirical analysis of research, learning, and service outcomes**

Strategy: SPPA evaluates evidence annually of the contributions of SPPA's EJI learning community's diversity of skills, perspectives, and experiences to research, teaching, and service outcomes. Tangible contributions of DEIJ to improved outcomes are noted, learned from, and publicized.

Responsibility: DEIJ committee, Director

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in May/June

**Goal 7. SPPA contributes to UI campus and community-wide DEIJ efforts**

**Objective 7.1: SPPA is actively engaged with campus-wide DEIJ efforts and programs**

Strategy: SPPA faculty and staff receive campus-wide training and contribute to relevant committees, task forces and programs

Responsibility: DEIJ committee, Director

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in May/June

**Objective 7.2: SPPA is actively engaged with community-wide DEIJ efforts and programs**

Strategy: SPPA faculty and students contribute to DEIJ efforts in Iowa City and beyond through IISC projects, class projects, volunteering and advising.

Responsibility: DEIJ committee, SPPA Director, IISC Director

Timeline: Reviewed annually by DEIJ committee in May/June

## APPENDIX: SPPA'S PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY

### Preamble

The School of Planning and Public Affairs is a learning, teaching and research community. These principles of community spell out our values, intentions, as well as best practices guiding our behaviors and interactions.

These principles, initially developed by students, faculty and staff on 2/12/2021, will be revisited annually. It is our intention that SPPA students, faculty and staff will commit to these principles. Implementing these principles requires honing our collective skills over time. Thus, we will regularly make time for open discussions, training, and skill-building as we seek mutual and life-long learning.

### Principles

- Honesty and integrity are core values in our teaching, learning, research and administration.
- We respect the dignity and humanity of all persons. We oppose violence and advocating violence, and seek nonviolent solutions to interpersonal and social issues.
- We strive to uphold a community free of discrimination in our interactions, teaching, research, administration, and outreach practices.
- We recognize the intrinsic connections between diversity of perspectives and experiences, and excellence in learning, teaching, research and administration.
- We are committed to freedom of expression and open dialogue that respect all perspectives, differences and commonalities, and to creating conditions where everyone feels safe to express their views. To do so, we:
  - Stay open to discussing all ideas, even unsettling ones we may disagree with;
  - Let everyone self-identify rather than identify others (e.g., "POC", "minority" is not acceptable to everyone, and word usage changes over time);
  - Listen carefully to -and do not silence- others, and validate others' statements and feelings;
  - Call each other *in* (i.e., asking for clarification) rather than *out* (i.e., judging or silencing);
  - Accept and learn from the feedback we receive during mutual learning moments;
  - Show generosity, acceptance, and forgiveness for others and ourselves (no one is perfect), thus giving each other grace and the "benefit of the doubt" (i.e., assuming the best);
  - Take responsibility for our actions, give meaningful apologies when needed, and are accountable for learning and improving our skills (accountability and forgiveness go hand in hand);
  - Pay attention to others' cues, strive to be sensitive to others' potential trauma history, and check in with those who might experience inappropriate treatment;
  - Remain mindful of cultural differences and diversity within cultures, and of how words and behaviors might be understood or perceived differently;
  - Acknowledge and be mindful of the power we hold as students, staff and academics, and of the unequal power relationships among ourselves;
- We show leadership in addressing the most pressing issues facing our local and global communities are central to our educational mission, and guide our curriculum, research, and outreach activities.
- We promote open and equitable access to opportunities for learning and development for students, staff and faculty.