

Fostering Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association

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Overview

The American Planning Association (APA) is an organization representing the field of urban planning in the United States. The organization provides leadership in the development of vital communities by advocating excellence in planning, promoting education and citizen empowerment, and providing members with the tools and support necessary to meet the challenges of growth and change.¹

When members join APA, they can also join a local APA chapter. Across the nation there are 47 chapters including Oregon's local chapter, the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA). In addition to carrying out the mission and vision of the APA, the OAPA is committed to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) recognizing these principles are fundamental to better prepare, retain, and support planners, including planners of color, so they can work more effectively and inclusively in Oregon's diverse communities.

As an effort to foster DEI among planners in Oregon, OAPA partnered with Portland State University's (PSU) Toulon School of Urban Studies and Planning (TSUSP) to 1) support TSUSP's internal efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion and to 2) support OAPA's efforts to develop strategies to advance DEI within the organization. One reason for this joint strategy was in recognizing that in order for the professional planning community in Oregon to include more diverse representation, then there is a need for more diverse students getting an education in planning. Likewise, both TSUSP and OAPA can improve in their attention to and treatment of topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

OAPA contracted with Professor Megan Horst and Mari Valencia, Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) student at TSUSP, to make some takeaways and recommendations for its work. We did this based on the following initiatives:

1. Leading group discussions with students of color (SOC) currently enrolled in programs within the TSUSP to better understand what is and isn't working for students and share main findings with OAPA, including the implications for OAPA;
2. Sharing/fostering dialogue about diversity, equity and inclusion with OAPA leaders and members, at the 2018 OAPA conference and the Legal Issues workshop;
3. Conducting research on how APA chapters across the United States are advancing DEI; and
4. Conducting a thorough review of OAPA's Strategic Plan² to offer recommendations to further advance DEI for the organization.

¹ American Planning Association website, <https://www.planning.org/>

² http://www.oregonapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/OAPA_StrategicPlan-2018-Update-11-16-18.pdf

Recommendations and Key Takeaways

- 1. Direct outreach to underrepresented groups, planners of color, and/or professionals in similar professions to better understand interests, barriers, and challenges can be useful for developing strategies to advance DEI and supporting recruitment efforts for underrepresented groups.** TSUSP and the APA New York Metro Diversity Committee's approach to convene, listen and respond to people of color's feedback through direct outreach (i.e. interviews and focus groups) allowed each entity to better understand interests, challenges, and barriers among underrepresented groups. Both efforts employed intentional, meaningful and responsive approaches which have resulted in positive outcomes for each entity – a path towards advancing DEI, understanding of how best to cater to needs/interests from underrepresented groups, and fostering an inclusive organizational culture which Oregon APA could adapt.
- 2. Planners and like professionals across Oregon have strong commitment to DEI but seek tools and resources to advance racial equity internally and externally.** Professionals across the state performing planning related work are highly interested in advancing DEI but need support. This was a key takeaway from the feedback received at the OAPA annual conference and the message recommended by the chairs of the APA Illinois Diversity Committee and the APA NY Metro Diversity Committee. It is recommended OAPA conduct outreach (i.e. survey, focus groups, at the annual conference, and/or at CM credit opportunities) to existing members to learn how the organization can best support them in the DEI space. Other recommendations/requests directly from participants at the OAPA annual conference included: webinars related to DEI with inclusion of tools/models used by professionals across the state/region, discussion opportunities locally and at the conferences, and the development of a database that contains the wealth of knowledge across our region related to DEI for members to access, utilize and contribute to.
- 3. OAPA can establish and nurture relationships with sister chapters, community organizations that represent historically underrepresented groups, planners of color, and others for shared learning, continued growth and support.** Equity work is not easy nor is there a right way. However, it is important to work with groups and populations who have historically been underrepresented or excluded in planning processes to better respond to needs. This can be done by establishing relationships with community organizations that support underrepresented groups or supporting affinity groups to elevate perspectives and to always ensure they have a space at the table. Learning and learning from sister chapters' DEI efforts can support OAPA's efforts and cultivate an environment of care, inclusivity, and sensitivity which is very much needed in equity related work.

4. **OAPA can nurture their relationship with student groups like graduate students of color at PSU and expand support to other similar student groups across the state.** Cultivating a relationship of care and support with rising students of color in the planning profession promotes commitment to equity, fosters an environment of cultural difference and diversity among the planning profession, elevates diverse and underrepresented perspectives, and underscores commitment to an essential framework.
5. **OAPA should define diversity, equity and inclusion relevant to the organization and their associated commitment to the principles.** Though the OAPA includes foundational principles of diversity, equity and inclusion within their strategic plan, they have not been defined as relevant to the organization. These terms must be defined in the way OAPA understands DEI and how they intend to closely connect and act on them. APA NY Metro's Diversity Committee co-created their vision, mission and goals with their membership and OAPA could consider this approach for developing definitions for DEI.
6. **Institutionalizing diversity, equity and inclusion is the pathway towards racial equity for the organization.** It is recommended that the OAPA center DEI throughout the organization, beyond a DEI committee, and establish processes and/or practices that advance DEI. One way to do this would be by adopting an equity lens for all decision-making and for all education and communication. Developing working plans for all groups and committees that center the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion will result in advancement in these areas throughout the organization and the broader profession. Lastly, it is important to develop evaluation criteria and a process to evaluate how well or not DEI goals/objectives/work are being met at all levels of the organization (i.e. board, leadership, committees, programs, etc.)

Part One: TSUSP Focus Groups with Students of Color

In the fall of 2017, TSUSP formed a committee to advance diversity, equity and inclusion at the college. The committee included two faculty members, including Professor Megan Horst as the chair, and two students of color. The DEI committee was charged with developing a strategic action plan to guide the department and the committee's future work related to diversity, equity and inclusion as a first action item for the newly formed group. Committee members strongly felt the action plan should be informed by the experiences and perspectives of students of color at TSUSP to better understand the college's strengths and areas for improvement in advancing DEI. Committee members conducted focus group discussions with students of color enrolled in one of the four main programs of the college – Bachelors in Community Development, Master of Urban and Regional Planning, Master of Urban Studies, and Doctorate in Urban Studies – to gather student feedback.

TSUSP DEI committee members chose to focus outreach to students of color to guide the action plan for several reasons including:

1. Recognizing a need for race-specific attention in TSUSP curricula and program;
2. Acknowledgment that race is a difficult yet important topic to talk about and intentional efforts to center race in discussion is critical to understand existing issues; and
3. By leading with race in the effort to learn perspectives and experiences would help address the needs of the most vulnerable students which in turn paves the way for uplifting all other students.

The focus group discussions were held on April 2018 with discussion focused on three topic areas: recruitment and retention, faculty and curriculum, and school and class climate. In total, 25 students participated in the in-person focus group discussions and five students provided feedback online by responding to an online survey made available to students unable to attend the in-person event. This high level of participation from students of color could not have been achieved without ensuring stipends and a meal were made available as a way to honor student's time but also to lesson burdens related to school and work, time away from work, or increased emotional labor. To offer a space where students of color could feel comfortable sharing their experiences, TSUSP secured professionals of color to facilitate the discussions and did not allow faculty to be in the rooms.

The following table summarizes high level key findings from the feedback received in the outreach effort.

Table 1: Student of Color Highlights from Focused Discussions

	Recruitment and Retention	Faculty and Curriculum	School and Class Climate
What TSUSP is doing well (i.e. what is working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and faculty reputation • Faculty support • Recruitment efforts including financial awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More diverse faculty. • Attention to racial equity in curriculum. • Attention to teaching. • SOC feel supported to develop skills and cultivate interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort building and training • Peers
Student concerns (i.e. room for improvement for TSUSP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall Portland/PSU/our programs are not very diverse. • Opportunity to bond with staff/faculty is not universal. • More support needed for international students. • Students are struggling to secure financial support. • Research and courses do not all resonate with SOC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising. • Equity discussions are minimal and insufficient. • White dominant pedagogy and curriculum. • Critical lived experiences and acknowledgement of racism are dismissed. • Students are struggling to secure internships. • TSUSP faculty are not representative of the diversity they speak about. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TSUSP presents a picture of equality but that is not the reality. • The climate is sometimes difficult for SOC and ESL students. • Many SOC have experienced microaggressions. • SOC report feeling tokenized and stereotyped in class. • Lack of acknowledgement and adequate response to SOC issues/concerns.
Student recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Valuing a more diverse student body. • Advising and faculty support. • More connections to professional networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire more professors of color with different cultural backgrounds. • Prioritize racial equity more strongly in the curriculum. • Draw from more diverse sources of knowledge. • More tailored curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More focused events. • Prioritize diversity and equity trainings, critical reflections. • Support inclusion for students of color.

Following the focus group discussions, the DEI committee developed a draft list of actions, short and long range, to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion efforts at TSUSP. In the development of this preliminary list, the approach for the actions outlined supported and strengthened initiatives the college is already doing that are working, address gaps, and focus on actions that were actionable. The main strategies for the action plan are shared in Table 2.

Table 2: Strategies to advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at TSUSP

Goal	Proposed Strategy
Enhance Recruitment & Retention of Students of Color (and other Diverse Students)	Report on student, applicant and acceptance diversity (racial, gender, domestic/international, etc), as well as retention rates
	Focus recruiting efforts on SOC and other diverse students. Streamline CD student-MURP or MUS pathway. Enlist GSOC in grad-level recruiting efforts (careful of tokenizing).
	Develop more systematic standards for valuing diversity and lived experience (and deal with how these conflicts with other priorities, like high GPAs) in admissions processes.
	Increase funding to recruit and retain diverse students (expand PPDA, beyond MURP). Seek resources from Dean, Foundation, professional networks, etc.
	Identify ways to improve advising & staff support to better meet needs of diverse students, e.g. SOC and international students
	Expand community and professional connections and pathways for diverse students
Enhance Faculty Ability to Lead Work on Equity & Deepen Attention to Racial (and other Equity) in Curriculum	Prioritize hiring diverse faculty and staff (including adjunct)
	Assess and deepen attention to structural oppression and racial (and other intersectional) equity in individual classes and across the curriculum. Deepen attention to equity in student learning outcomes. Consider merit of adding a class focused on equity issues.
	Promote diversity (racial and other identities) in terms of authors, readings, resources, in individual classes and across curriculum.
	Hold faculty accountable to prioritizing racial equity. Consider integrating in review processes. Offer incentives.
Foster an Inclusive Classroom & School Climate	Create affirming and inclusive classrooms. Support students in bringing full intersectional identities to class. Model anti-racist work. Seek feedback. Reflect on lessons learned. Grow.
	Training and resources for faculty, for example on inclusive classrooms, calling in/out, stopping microaggressions, etc. Expand online resources here: https://www.pdx.edu/usp/faculty-resources-0
	Offer training and resources for students during orientation, throughout year, online., etc. Includes specific attention/resources for white students. (Topics: microaggressions, intent versus impact, etc.)
	Raise attention to DEI as a priority of TSUSP, for example by highlighting research, website updates, holding events, partnering with OAPA and others, etc.
	Make DEI a priority at faculty meetings and in decision-making. Monitor progress on action plan.
	Offer feedback mechanisms for students of color and other historically disadvantaged students; report out to faculty and staff

The TSUSP effort was mainly focused internally on the school, though there are several potential implications for OAPA, including:

- **OAPA can potentially support recruiting and retention efforts** by TSUSP, for example by providing funding for scholarships, and offering training and educational opportunities that are attractive to students of color and other diverse students.
- **OAPA can improve its mentoring and networking** opportunities for students and professionals of color and from other diverse backgrounds.
- **OAPA may be able to glean insight into ideas for seeking feedback, as well as possible substantive areas of improvement** for OAPA in the areas above, as applicable to OAPA.

Part Two: Dialogue with OAPA Leaders and Members

OAPA's 2018 Annual Conference: Challenges as Opportunities – An Interactive Discussion on Social Equity and Inclusive Growth

As part of OAPA's partnership with TSUSP, the findings from the focus group discussions described above were shared at the annual OAPA conference held in the Riverhouse on the Deschutes Convention Center. Mari presented on Thursday, October 19, 2018 in a plenary titled "Challenges as Opportunities: An Interactive Discussion on Social Equity and Inclusive Growth." There were roughly 15 attendees in the session. Following the presentation, participants were divided into two groups and engaged in informal discussion around inclusive engagement practices and advancing racial equity within places of work, including the hiring process. The following are key takeaways from the discussions (and informed our overall recommendations):

- **Planners across Oregon seek tools and resources to conduct culturally responsive engagement programs.** Many participants are committed to developing participatory processes that result in high levels of participation from underrepresented groups but desire more information from OAPA to conduct initiatives that will be responsive to various cultural groups and communities, for example the Black, Asian, immigrant, refugees, LGBTQ, communities, along with the community of folks experiencing disabilities, poverty and homelessness. Strategies offered varied but included things like: partnering with community-based organizations and/or community leaders, conducting direct outreach such as door-to-door canvassing or focus groups with underrepresented groups, or ensuring provision of childcare, stipends, or meals to reduce barriers to participation.
- **Planners across Oregon are doing great work related to inclusive engagement and seek more opportunities for shared learning and networking.** As participants shared strategies and approaches to inclusive engagement, many wished there were more opportunities like the session to continue to learn from others, including through webinars. Some participants suggested OAPA host more interactive sessions at annual conferences, develop a database that members could access and/or contribute to, or offer lunch and learns to learn from others.
- **Planners are committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion but seek models, case studies, or resources to utilize to advance racial equity within their places of work.** All participants recognized the importance of DEI in their work environments and the importance it brings to the communities they serve. Many shared their strong commitment to advancing racial equity however discussed the multiple barriers to overcome including resistance from colleagues who do not value DEI, institutional barriers, and/or funding. Many participants appreciated hearing how planners are addressing barriers and challenges yet wished for broader support recognizing important work is being done across the state and in various sectors.

OAPA's Legal Issues Conference: Diversity in the Profession – Ethics and Career Advancement in Planning Panel Session

Mari and Megan participated in a panel called “Diversity in the Profession” at the OAPA Legal Issues conference on December 7th, 2018 (where attendees could obtain AICP Ethics CM credits). There were several hundred attendees. Other speakers included Robin Scholetzky and Paddy Tillet, and the panel was moderated by Dennis Egner (City of Milwaukie).

Other panelists made connections to the AICP code of ethics, shared information about the demographics of planners in the USA and in Oregon, and articulated benefits of prioritizing diversity. Megan and Mari emphasized the need to focus not just on diversity but also equity and inclusion. We also shared highlights from our focus groups with students of color and examples of strategies from PSU's DEI strategic plan.

Audience members asked many questions and shared examples from their own experiences. Some of the issues that came up were: meaningful engagement of diverse communities in planning participation processes, prioritizing DEI in hiring processes, and fostering inclusive work cultures. All of these issues are very relevant to the work that OAPA can consider and undertake as the organization works to advance DEI, for example in offering education and training to members.

Part Three: Research on APA Chapters and their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Efforts

OAPA has worked extensively to promote and advance diversity, equity and inclusion within the chapter over the past years. In 2000, the Women in Planning Committee was formed, originally a working group brought to Portland from an ad-hoc group founded at the University of Oregon. Since the committee joined OAPA, the group has served to connect and support women in all areas of the planning profession.³ In the last decade, the Emerging Planners Group (EPG) was formed to support planning students and emerging planners of any age within the first few years of their careers.⁴ Recently, in 2018, OAPA formed a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group to integrate DEI efforts and employ an equity lens into the Chapter's work.

As a newly formed group, the DEI Working Group seeks to learn the efforts being performed by other Chapter DEI groups and/or committees to guide the working group's charge. This section provides an overview of the efforts related to DEI across the APA Chapters.

APA Chapters – DEI Efforts

A number of chapters across the nation are engaging in addressing diversity, inclusion and social equity. Chapters are offering mentorship programs, hosting trainings related to DEI, hosting diversity summits, and cultivating diverse chapter leaders. The following APA Chapters have active diversity committees⁵:

- California
- Illinois
- New Jersey
- New York Metro
- North Carolina

Other local chapters with DEI committees and/or working to develop DEI related committees as identified by the APA include:

- Colorado
- Virginia
- Washington
- Texas

³ <http://www.oregonapa.org/committees/women-in-planning-committee/>

⁴ <http://www.oregonapa.org/committees/emerging-planners-group/#>

⁵ <https://www.planning.org/diversity/>

California Diversity and Inclusion Committee

The APA California Chapter currently has over 5,000 members. The Chapter as a whole is interested in encouraging a diverse membership and provide support to anyone seeking to participate in the planning field. To do so, the Chapter has two board members dedicated in assisting the Chapter in fulfilling these goals – a Membership Inclusion Director for Northern and for Southern California. Additionally, the APA California Chapter sponsors a Diversity Summit at the APA annual conference every year to provide a forum to discuss DEI and offer members a space to network and shared learning related to DEI.

Illinois Diversity Committee

The APA Illinois Chapter’s Diversity Committee was formed to provide ongoing education forums and opportunities for planners, students and university faculty of different backgrounds to network, shared learning, and bringing recognition to unique and diverse values and perspectives. The Chapter offers a series of free webinars related to DEI throughout the year. Members can also receive professional development credits to maintain their professional certification (AICP). Webinar topics have included:

- “Equitable Public Engagement: Participatory Budgeting for Transportation Funds”
- “Historic Preservation of African American Cemeteries”
- “Women in Planning: The Road to FAICP”

New Jersey Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee

The APA New Jersey Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee was formed in May 2009. Since, the Committee has been committed to providing ongoing educational forums for planners, students, and university faculty throughout the state of New Jersey. The Committee also works hard to increase diversity among the overall Chapter recognizing this maximizes innovation.

New York Metro Diversity Committee

The APA New York Metro Diversity Committee is one of the most (if not the most) active local chapter diversity committee across the U.S. The Committee is committed to increasing diversity and cultural competency within the planning profession and offer resources to planners of different backgrounds in the NY Metro area for shared learning and to build meaningful connections and networks. The following are the Committee’s goals and objectives⁶:

- Foster a welcoming environment, safe space and community for planners of varied backgrounds to share experiences, find mentorship, personally/professionally grow, and make deep connections.
- Actively address barriers to recruitment and retention of underrepresented peoples in the profession, including but not limited to people of color, women, and LGBTQ-identifying individuals. This includes assisting the national APA’s Diversity Task Force

⁶ <https://www.nyplanning.org/group-page/diversity/>

in implementing objectives towards improving diversity and turning the lens on the planning profession.

- Serve as a resource of information on diversity and planning issues, success stories, events, leadership training, workshops, etc., especially for institutions.
- Work together with other APA NY Metro committees, sections, and national divisions to ensure that content of programs include diverse voices/panels and cover concepts of equity and inclusivity.

North Carolina Membership and Diversity Committee

The APA North Carolina Membership and Diversity Committee was formed to expand diversity across the Chapter membership and encourage diversity in the planning profession. The following are primary Committee responsibilities:

- Welcome new members to the chapter.
- Create promotional materials that encourage membership including those traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.
- Raise money to support the annual Student Summer Fellowship.
- Develop other promotional programs as opportunities become available.

Interviews with APA Illinois Diversity Committee and APA New York Metro Diversity Committee

As an effort to better understand how local chapter diversity committees are advancing DEI efforts, the APA Illinois Diversity Committee and APA New York Metro Diversity Committee were engaged. Note: The other diversity committees were reached out to, however, response was never received. The following section summarizes the learnings obtained from the interviews with Diversity Committee chairs.

APA New York Metro Diversity Committee

This interview was conducted with Tiffany Ann Taylor, Co-Chair of the Diversity Committee of the APA New York Metro Chapter, on December 18, 2018.

How did the committee form?

Ms. Taylor explained the Diversity Committee of the APA New York Metro Chapter was formally known as the “Planners for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee” and was founded in the 1990’s. In 2001, the committee published one of its most important achievements a report called *Lagging Behind: Ethnic Diversity in the Planning Profession*. The report highlighted the ethnic and racial disparity in planning and provided important recommendations for supporting people of color in the profession. The committee became dormant until around 2010 when the chapter recruited Ms. Taylor and Giovania Tiarachristie to help revive the group in 2015. The committee was renamed “Diversity Committee” in response to a collective desire to

include race and ethnic issues, as well as intersections with gender, sexuality, class, and disability.

How did you “revive” the group?

Ms. Taylor said that over the course of three to five months herself and Ms. Tiarachristie recruited new members and held multiple brainstorming sessions to co-create a vision, mission, and set of goals for the revived committee. To recruit members, Ms. Tiffany and Ms. Tiarachristie tapped into their personal networks, promoted the committee through the chapter newsletter, and co-hosted happy hours with other committees. Additionally, Ms. Tiarachristie was working on her thesis focused on diversity in the planning profession and as part of her thesis she conducted focus groups and interviews with various planners of color and was able to recruit new members from this effort. Ms. Taylor explained that membership fees were waived to allow accessibility to the Chapter and the Diversity Committee. To develop the vision, mission and goals of the committee, the group conducted asset mapping to identify membership skills and networks. From there, the group worked with the executive committee of the New York Chapter to get approval on the final vision, mission and goals.

What are the types of activities of the committee?

Ms. Taylor said the committee offers a wide variety of activities that align with the committee’s mission, vision and goals. The committee meets monthly and organizes two major events annually. She described the following committee activities:

- *In-person committee monthly meetings:* The first hour (or less) is dedicated for the group to express frustration, excitement, celebrate a professional achievement, offer support or ask questions about something that has happened to them since the last meeting. Ms. Taylor explained that often she finds that the group talks about micro and macro aggressions experienced in the workplace and the session turns into a much-needed professional development session and group therapy. She said there is one rule during this first have and that is that no information offered leaves the room. The second half of the meeting is reserved for business items.
- *Community gatherings:* These events consist of happy hours, craft nights, recreational activities, and/or other events to support healing. Sometimes the Diversity Committee partners with other committees to host activities and events.
- *Annual Hindsight Conference:* Ms. Taylor explained that the committee found this conference in the fall of 2017. It is national event and open to all (no APA membership required). She said in a nutshell it is a conference “that focuses on equity in urban planning as a lens –not a box to check on a form”.

How does the Diversity Committee inspire continued membership and participation?

Ms. Taylor explained that the committee is pretty hands off on inspiring membership and participation. She said “we always encourage our members to have APA membership, but it is

by no means a mandate. G and I have a personal believe that we should encourage and support members in pursuing roles in the committee that they seem to gravitate to and/or are really good at. Since the opportunity to be leaders in that space may not exist in the day jobs of our members, we find that supporting them in their committee roles often leads to an organic inspiration to have continued membership and participation in the committee.”

Final question: OAPA is in the midst of forming a formal DEI Committee to advance DEI efforts throughout the Chapter. Do you have any recommendations or thoughts for them as they work to form this committee and how best to recruit and support planners of color?

Ms. Taylor said this is a question that she is often asked, and it is not easy to answer. The following is her exact response: “I think the first thing that I would say is that while trying to recruit planners of color is important and a noble cause--the challenges of diversity and inclusion are issues for everyone. Meaning, what are you doing now with current membership to have the difficult conversations about equity, diversity and inclusion in their daily work and in their work as a chapter? How are you defining these terms? How are you educating each other so that you have a shared language on a difficult subject? How are you leveraging your relationships with sister chapters to foster these conversations? How are you being inclusive in chapter events? I would encourage chapter leadership to think about its recruitment practices and how inclusion is addressed in any events that it sponsors. Are you reaching out to community organizations that represent historically underrepresented groups? What about bringing in consultants in this field? Are you publishing position papers on current events? Do you have strong relationships with local colleges/universities? What about reaching out to urban planning adjacent professions? What about skype conversations with sister chapters that have active diversity committees or have made it a priority to have more inclusive language in their bylaws and in their practice? How are you using social media? What events are you co-sponsoring? When the chapter can start to answer these questions thoughtfully, I think it will become clear about what work needs to be done about recruitment and what work needs to be done in-house to support that.”

APA Illinois Diversity Committee

This interview was conducted with Marcella Bondie Keenan, Chair of the Diversity Committee of the APA Illinois Chapter, on December 17, 2018.

How did the Diversity Committee form?

Ms. Keenan explained the Diversity Committee formed in response to the need to support planners of color in the profession, offer a network for shared learning, and to elevate the perspectives of planners of color. She said currently the Committee is comprised of roughly 15 volunteer members with diverse backgrounds including gender, sexual orientation, race, etc.

What are the types of activities of the committee?

Ms. Keenan said that the committee offers different activities including webinar series centering diversity, equity and inclusion, neighborhood walks through ethnic enclaves in the Chicago area, and outreach to youth of color to promote the planning profession.

How does the Diversity Committee inspire continued membership and participation?

Ms. Keenan said that the committee through funding has employed a full-time communications staff to support recruitment and committee communications. She said the committee is rather small right now but hopes that the work from the communications staff will result in increased membership, especially from planners of color. She also said that the Diversity Committee doesn't require membership dues for accessibility purposes, like Ms. Tiffany with the APA NY Metro Diversity Committee.

Final question: The OAPA is in the midst of forming a formal DEI Committee to advance DEI efforts throughout the Chapter. Do you have any recommendations or thoughts for them as they work to form this committee and how best to recruit and support planners of color?

Ms. Keenan said that it is important for OAPA to expand their relationship with the graduate students of color group, tap into existing networks to recruit professionals of color, and/or pull membership from other similar professional sectors.

Key takeaways from APA DEI Chapter Interviews

- DEI Committees must be responsive to the needs and interests of their membership which may mean offering different types of activities.
- Reducing barriers to participation should be considering and this could be eliminating membership fees or securing venues for various activities within reach of your target constituency.
- Equity work is not easy and there is no formula for how best to approach this work however learning from underrepresented groups, asking questions, and engaging in tough conversations is a great place to start!

Part Four: OAPA Strategic Plan Review

The OAPA recently adopted their updated strategic plan in November 2018. This update was a yearlong process that included outreach to existing board members, department of land conservation and development (DLCD) staff, and OAPA members to help refine the organization's mission, vision, guiding principles, and goals and objectives. The following section provides a high-level review of the strategic plan update specifically within the purpose, guiding principles and the strategic initiatives and committees' sections of the plan where DEI should be centered.

Purpose: OAPA mission and vision

As OAPA moves towards efforts to advance diversity, equity and inclusion, the mission and vision of the organization must also center these critical principles. The mission statement offers a straightforward message for the organization but could be stronger by promoting DEI in the statement. Though the vision statement includes "social equity" it lacks celebratory language that honors and celebrates Oregon's diverse communities which planners must serve. Further, inclusive language could be used by including language that speaks to the importance of diversity among the planning profession. The word "citizen" should be replaced with "community member" to be inclusive to immigrant and refugee populations.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles outlined in this section are great principles, especially if informed by existing members and organizational leadership. The only area to consider reviewing in this section falls within the diversity, equity and inclusion definition box. Though PolicyLink is a credible and powerful resource, the equity definition must be developed by OAPA's members and leadership as it must be relevant to the organization. Further, the definitions of diversity and inclusion must be refined. It is recommended that the definitions be refined by leaning on community experts, local leaders, planners of color, existing members, and organizational leadership.

Strategic Initiatives and Committees

It is great for OAPA to offer various committees for members to participate in and/or go to for support or resources. The burden of diversity, equity and inclusion often lies on a DEI group or people of color; however, this should not be the case. DEI must be centered throughout the organization including all the committees and initiatives, so it is not an afterthought and the work does not fall on a single committee (i.e. DEI committee). One way for OAPA to better ensure attention to DEI across its various workgroups and committees would be to adopt an equity lens, such as the ones adopted by the City of Seattle, Multnomah County, and Portland State University.

OAPA Survey Review

As part of our involvement with OAPA on DEI issues, we also weighed in on OAPA's annual survey. We shared our comments in an email with the OAPA Program and Policy Coordinator. In general, we recommend that OAPA consider using the survey as a place to both practice its prioritization of DEI and collect feedback about OAPA's DEI efforts.

Closing Thoughts

TSUSP, Megan Horst and Mari Valencia thank OAPA leadership, the DEI Working Group and the organization at large for the opportunity to support OAPA's efforts to advance diversity, equity and inclusion within the organization. We commend OAPA's commitment to equity and the work associated with this effort; we look forward to following the organization's work as this is only the beginning.