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Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/33d5c6v3>

Journal

Landscape Journal, 37(1)

ISSN

0277-2426

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Publication Date

2018

DOI

10.3368/lj.37.1.1

Peer reviewed

Diversity and Inclusion by Design: A Challenge for Us All

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“Engaged Scholarship: Bringing Together Research, Teaching, and Service” is the theme of the 2019 Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) conference. The aim is to start a dialogue about the ways in which our community of practice focuses on issues of public concern and is useful to, and developed in concert with, diverse audiences beyond the academy. While public engagement is not new to our field, there is increasing attention to the ways in which engaged forms of scholarship advance diversity and inclusion in higher education. Diversity and inclusion effects are mainstream and are now an integral part of many universities and colleges. Based on our review of websites, almost all U.S. institutions with an accredited landscape architecture program have offices dedicated to promoting the value of a diverse academic community while ensuring representation of underrepresented individuals on campus. Supplementing these efforts are a growing number of training courses, workshops, and other mechanisms that value diversity, while also increasing awareness and understanding of the effects of implicit/hidden bias, macro and microaggressions, and other forms of discrimination.

Whether individual faculty welcome these changes or not, attention to diversity issues and inclusion are not going away as our students are beginning to mirror the changing demographic landscape outside of the ivory tower, and as more women, international, and people of color enter the field. For example, 2017 Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board data indicate that more than 50% of all students (graduate and undergraduate) were women,¹ and that individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups grew from 32% to 44% of the total student body between 2013 and 2017. In 2001, only 11% of graduating landscape architecture students were non-whites (ASLA,

2018a). Embracing these trends, prominent landscape architecture organizations, including CELA, signed a commitment to “achieve a professional profile that correlates with the 2012 population-share estimates, while working toward the longer-term goal of parity with 2016 projections for the nation as a whole” by 2025 (ASLA, 2018b, p. 1).

Diversifying academia will likely have a direct impact on efforts to diversify the profession. The American Society of Landscape Architecture’s (ASLA) inaugural diversity summit in 2013 revealed the lack of mentors, “and specifically mentors that looked like them,” as the greatest hurdle for recruiting underrepresented students interested in the profession. In their most recent diversity summit (2017), the ASLA established a five-year prioritized action list to meet diversity goals, including diversifying imagery and resources integrated across their website, and increasing accessibility of these resources to underrepresented minorities. In response, as landscape architecture academics, we must ask: What is being done to diversify the faculty ranks and the organizations that we lead? How is diversity and inclusion reflected when it comes to faculty recruitment and advancement, and selection of department/program chairs, as well as the composition of organizational and journal editorial boards and offices? More importantly, what additional actions need to be taken to achieve a diverse and inclusive academy?

There is evidence to suggest that institutional policy change and other top-down approaches will have minimal impact on faculty diversity. A recent study by Bradley et al. (2018) found no “significant statistical evidence that preexisting growth in diversity for underrepresented racial/ethnic minority groups is affected by the hiring of an executive level diversity officer for new tenure and non-tenure track hires, faculty hired with

tenure, or for university administrator hires” (p. 1). This is not to suggest a causal linkage exists between hiring a diversity officer and the lack of progress being made. Other factors need to be considered such as the provision and effective use of resources and the particular institutional culture in which diversity is being advanced. Regardless, it becomes important to reflect on how and in what ways do our collective and individual behaviors either contribute to, or ameliorate, existing representation gaps. It is one thing to believe in and support diversity. It is far more difficult to break down barriers of exclusion and practice inclusion in our everyday lives. Silence is complicity when it comes to individual and collective actions that reinforce power imbalances—in the studio, classroom, faculty meetings, and other professional settings. To believe any of us are immune to such discriminatory slippages is simply false, regardless of how one identifies by race, ethnicity, gender, class, or other means.

As educators, researchers, and scholars, we often pride ourselves in the insights, discoveries, and new knowledge that shape the profession and larger society. Just as the 1966 “Declaration of Concern” (Miller et al., 1966) placed landscape architecture at the forefront of the sustainable environmental design and planning movement, this current moment provides an opportunity to establish the profession as a leader in addressing persistent social and racial inequities. In order to do so, we must seriously note the changes that are taking place outside our privileged locations and rethink our societal relationships. Or, to take the example of the “Declaration of Concern,” consider Gina Marie Ford’s (FASLA) critical response at the Landscape Architecture Foundation’s 2016 retrospective: “Fifty years ago, the voice of our profession was eerily prescient, undeniably smart, and powerfully inspired. It was also, let’s admit it, almost entirely white and male” (2017, p. 101). Events within the past decade such as the Occupy Movement, the Ferguson protests and Black Lives Matter, the fight for LGBTQ rights and, more recently, the #MeToo Movement, can no longer be ignored as was the case with the Civil Rights Movement a generation earlier. It is clear we have not done enough yet to change our institutional environments and personal behaviors towards a more equitable and engaged culture.

We must continue to diversify our faculty ranks and student body, as well as program and

organizational leadership. In order to achieve this obvious opportunity, it will require us to move beyond an examination of numbers alone. Instead, it is crucial to work towards creating an inclusive culture in our scholarly and creative practice. If the value of diversity in academia includes the mentorship of minority students, innovative/creative research methodologies, and the ability to address the needs of underserved communities—these contributions must be recognized as such by academia and move beyond the unseen labor in which they currently operate. An inclusive culture of scholarly and creative practice can take many forms and includes collaborative relationships with local communities as well as providing access to university resources, to intellectual pursuits and organized research that inform and shape public policies and debates, to scientific and technological innovations that improve people’s lives and the environments in which they inhabit. Collectively, these activities have impact at different geographic scales, across sectors, and between disciplines that aim to improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and the planet. Yet, despite their potential for transformative societal change, some higher learning institutions insist on ignoring the labor-intensive nature of this work or devalue their scholarly contributions.

These types of activities can be described as the “scholarship of engagement,” borrowing a term from Ernest Boyer (1996), who challenged institutions of higher education to go beyond traditional definitions of research, teaching, and service toward articulating the scholarly contributions in each of these categories. Today, this reflects a shift away from using the terms “service” or “outreach” and instead an embrace of “engagement” to describe reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships between faculty, students, and non-university groups. Equally important is a conception of knowledge that has relevance beyond the academy, and is often produced with, not for, non-university groups, towards actionable outcomes.

These scholarly practices are familiar to our field given the focus on the “design, planning, and management of the land.” Scholarly practice examples include evaluative studies that assess built works from a user perspective, inquiry that tests resilient responses to climate change, or ecologically-based research to improve urban habitat, among others. Each example speaks to the important role that landscape architects can play

as the leaders, choreographers, and communicators for addressing the most complex socio-ecological problems of our era and which require transformative learning and adaptive governance models. The truth is, addressing the majority of the pressing contemporary environmental concerns requires recognition of societal conditions that exacerbate their impacts. In addition, a substantial amount of professional training focuses on project-based and experiential learning that addresses societal concern issues. Many curricula facilitate interaction between students and non-university groups through studio projects, practicum courses, education abroad, and internships, among other forms of learning. Often landscape architecture programs organize these activities through the many community engaged centers and non-profit organizations. These centers are part of a larger ecosystem of publicly-facing and multi-disciplinary design organizations that, since 2000, have nearly tripled in North America from under 70 to over 200 (ACSA, 2014). Despite the positive impact that these activities have had for non-university groups and shaping the professional trajectory of many students, little progress has been made in defining how engaged scholarship intersects with diversity and inclusion more explicitly, and how this is valued and assessed when it comes to faculty recognition and the supportive infrastructure necessary to incentivize faculty participation. Or, to refer again to Ford's Declaration retrospective: "We will need to wholeheartedly embrace the rich diversity of who we are and strive more ambitiously to understand and meet the needs of the people we serve" (2017, p. 103).

These concerns are not unique to the landscape architecture field. Recent interviews with over 50 UC Davis faculty from the university's ten colleges and schools identified significant barriers to practicing engaged scholarship. Community engaged research requires an enormous amount of work due to the relationships and interactions with non-university groups, and is essentially invisible institutional labor. This research approach often necessitates a substantial amount of time, coordination, and non-university resources that other forms of research do not require. Related, many colleagues do not value the placement of public scholarship outputs unless they are published in traditional journals and fora. An examination of merit and promotion criteria of thirty-three institutions designated as Carnegie community-engaged campuses,

revealed that the majority still placed engaged scholarship within the realm of service and required additional forms of scholarship to support merit and promotion (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). This leaves faculty few options other than to do this type of work on their own time because they feel it is important, not because they believe they will be rewarded. Compounding these challenges is the difficulty in devoting the time to develop collaborations with non-university groups outside existing commitments. The decentralized nature of many campuses has produced enclaves that exist within the confines of colleges and schools, which does little to promote the value of engaged scholarship or sustain collaborations or communications across disciplines and academic units. University-wide support for scholarship that involves partnerships with non-corporate/non-industry partners, community stakeholders, and other public entities is also lacking as compared to other sponsored research that involves industry or generates significant revenue.

Fortunately, many landscape architecture programs already support engaged scholarship, especially given a general orientation toward applied research as well as professionally credentialed curricula. However, we must do a better job in communicating and amplifying the importance of this work in serving the public good, measuring its impact outside of the academy, and elevating excellence in research and teaching. The interviewed UC Davis faculty echoed these sentiments and also shared the main motivations and benefits for why engaged scholarship is essential to their work. Some of the reasons include deepening research and learning, serving the underserved, and relevant to this discussion, as a means of practicing more effective diversity and inclusion at higher education institutions. For example, many are personally motivated by a sense of obligation given their position of privilege and/or seeing an imperative to support those that do not have the privilege. As evidenced by these personal experiences, engaged scholarship allows for a more democratic and inclusive scholarly practice than traditional avenues of research and teaching. However, there is much to be done to create an institutional culture that values, recognizes, and rewards public scholarship as essential to the civic mission of higher education institutions, especially public universities that espouse serving the public good. So what can be done to move closer to these ideals in supporting diversity and inclusion?

Valuing and supporting publicly engaged research and teaching requires that we respond to the changing demographic landscape in urban, suburban, and rural communities (Rios & Vazquez, 2012) and improve experiential learning opportunities in ways that connect with a diverse student body. Creating an inclusive community of faculty from different backgrounds is one place to start. With the increased diversity among recent graduates, it is no longer excusable to suggest that diversity is lacking among the qualified pool of individuals seeking to enter into the academy as faculty. While it is unreasonable to expect transforming the face of the academy necessarily transforms its values, we need to make explicit the types of research and teaching our programs support. For example, a recent study by UC Berkeley indicates that faculty job descriptions that included a subject area with public or engaged scholarship saw higher proportions of women and underrepresented minority (URM) applicants as compared with searches that did not use this approach (Stacy et al., 2018). Moving beyond recruitment, there is also a need to create spaces where individuals feel welcomed, respected, and can express divergent viewpoints. Recent studies indicate implicit bias still impacts retention of URM faculty in landscape architecture and other disciplines (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Smith & Calasanti, 2005; Whittaker et al., 2015; Zambrana et al., 2015). Whittaker et al. (2015) write:

[T]he persistent “calls to action” designed to catalyze diversification of the professoriate have resulted in incremental changes at best. As such, successes of a few URM individuals appear to have led to a sense of complacency along with generalized notions that URM no longer face discrimination. The successes of a few can lead to many institutions contracting recruitment and retention efforts. The few (or single) individuals that have been recruited are then left as potential “token” representatives with high service demands, which are not among rewarded performance criteria and/or of limited impact. While discrimination or imposed isolation may not always be blatantly overt, a critical factor and consideration in addressing this issue revolves around environmental and inherent unconscious biases directed towards URM in the academic

workplace. Institutions should recognize this as a sense of urgency and commit to the transformational and sustained work required to mitigate the problem, which will require long-term, strategic initiatives and commitment of resources (p. 137).

In an academic setting, particular norms—not only determined by gender, race, ethnicity, and other attributes, but also by disciplinary culture, methods and approaches to research and teaching, and professorial rank—are reinforced through practices and behaviors carried out by individuals, colleagues, peer mentors, and departments that police the boundaries of what constitutes time well spent. Moreover, the use of headcounts alone to support faculty diversity exemplifies how affirmative action and other metric-based means of recruitment can hinder retention and advancement. It is not uncommon for a female faculty and/or faculty of color to feel disempowered or have their scholarly and creative work devalued under the assumption that their recruitment was based on their gender and/or ethnicity, and not by the merits of their scholarship/capabilities (Turner et al., 2008). Additional examples of hurdles to retention and advancement of underrepresented faculty include evidence that student teaching evaluations are often skewed to the disadvantage of women and/or minority faculty (Lilienfeld, 2016), research that suggests female faculty carry greater service commitments than their male counterparts (Guarino & Borden, 2017), and a study exploring gendered racism perpetrated by white male students towards female faculty of color (Pittman, 2010). Online training, retreats and other supports to create and sustain a thriving program culture address these issues head on and ensure underrepresented faculty will want to remain. Services that address implicit bias and cross-cultural understanding, among others, are now available at many universities and colleges.

Beyond creating a culture of inclusion, we must also take a hard look at merit and promotion to ensure success, especially among faculty whose work center on some form of public or community engagement. As Patricia Matthew, author of *Written/Unwritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure*, notes: “Chances are a faculty member of color is not going to get a sabbatical or a grant from her institution because she contributes to the diversity mission her university

probably has posted somewhere on its website. She certainly isn't going to get tenure for it" (2016, p. 1). Instead, this effort begins with correlating diversity missions with explicit statements about what a program/campus values and how these values translate into specific criteria. When revising the appointment, merit, and promotion evaluation criteria in our Landscape Architecture + Environmental Design program at UC Davis, this included referencing the campus mission statement, university standards for research and creative excellence, and comparison to commensurate institutions and programs. The UC Davis mission statement is as follows:

. . . generation, advancement, dissemination and application of knowledge. . . teaching students as a partnership between faculty mentors and young scholars; advancing knowledge and pioneering studies through creative research and scholarship; and applying that knowledge to address the needs of the region, state, nation and globe . . . Committed to the land grant tradition on which it was founded, which holds that *the broad purpose of a university is service to people and society*" (UC Davis APM, 2018, Section 210–1).

Interestingly, this statement reflects many goals of an engaged model of scholarship and supports the criteria identified for evaluating such a scholarly pursuit. In addition, the document required defining the unique scholarly practices of landscape architecture academics:

Landscape architecture and related placemaking professions are broad and inclusive disciplines in which faculty members pursue different career paths as they become successful and productive scholars and teachers in the academic community. The faculty recognizes that the strength of the program depends on an intellectually engaged faculty who successfully pursue diverse career paths and academic and professional activities (Matthew, 2016, p. 2).

Thus, our appointment, merit, and promotion document identifies the value of diversity and the role engaged scholarship might play in supporting that effort without resorting to specific metrics or overt

statements about race, ethnicity, gender, or other legally protected characteristics of an existing or prospective faculty member.

These efforts are more than symbolic gestures, but serve as the basis for writing candidate statements, evaluating dossiers, and writing merit and promotion review letters. Purposeful criteria help to ensure success at the department or program level, but more often, when faculty dossiers are reviewed by college and university committees unfamiliar with engaged scholarship. For example, explicit criteria were a deciding factor for a faculty member in our program who received a split vote by a university-wide review committee that was successfully overturned. In the deciding letter, departmental criteria for promotion were explicitly referenced and included diverse scholarly outputs as well as a focus on "publicly engaged research or creative work" and "publications more broadly presented than is customary." However, not all institutions have checks and balances to ensure an adequate review of engaged scholarship and its scholarly value. In response, some institutions such as the University of Minnesota are taking it a step further and are launching a university-wide committee that reviews promotion portfolios of publicly engaged scholars, and provides supplemental review letters that assess the quality of promotion candidates' engaged scholarship. This is in addition to a number of other supports such as departmental grants to "plan, establish, implement, and evaluate strategic initiatives that advance the integration of public engagement into the departments' research and teaching activities" (University of Minnesota, 2017).

As educators we also must do our part to ensure that educational environments are inclusive spaces for student success. Implicit bias, microaggressions and other hurdles to a diverse faculty are also challenges to a diverse student body—an obvious necessity if we are going to see greater diversity in the profession and the academy. Again, workshops that address these challenges are increasingly available to instructors as a means of identifying implicit bias and other impediments to an inclusive learning environment. In 2017, a mandatory microaggression training was provided for all faculty at Suffolk University in response to a blog post that went viral written by a Latina student who was wrongly accused of plagiarism for using the word "hence" in a literature review. Her written response

articulated what many underrepresented individuals feel within the academy:

My last name and appearance immediately instill a set of biases before I have the chance to open my mouth. These stereotypes and generalizations forced on marginalized communities are at times debilitating and painful. As a minority in my classrooms, I continuously hear my peers and professors use language that both covertly and overtly oppresses the communities I belong to (Martinez, 2016).

Unfortunately, these kinds of biases can feel routine in academia to minority students; moreover, these transgressions often occur without full awareness by those who might have committed the offense.

Just as more diverse metrics of academic success need to be considered to achieve a more diverse faculty, instructors need to embrace broader conceptualizations of what constitutes an ideal student. Oftentimes, extroverted characteristics (active verbal participation, for example) are rewarded in scholastic settings, and the students that make themselves more “visible” in a classroom or those with charisma are awarded more accolades. This can be particularly true in design studio instruction, where oral presentations can serve as a major means of evaluating student work. Valuing such characteristics, however, reflects a particular cultural bias that student knowledge is reflected only through verbal articulation. Equally problematic is an over-reliance on individual student assessments. Different types of feedback instruments are needed, including ones that also instigate reflective learning for both individuals and groups. Recently within our own program, our faculty recognized the important need to reassess our metrics for student success following an evaluation of our Olmsted Scholar nominees over the past years—this very process led us to the conclusion that we had been utilizing culturally based definitions of academic strength (such as active class participation and leadership roles in group projects) and brought about new perspectives in recognizing student achievements. Interestingly, LAF criteria for Olmsted Scholars include “leadership” and “communication skills” (Landscape Architecture Foundation, 2018).

Finally, there are substantial data supporting that zero-tolerance policies disproportionately impact

students of color (Hines-Datiri & Andrews, 2017). Despite this, educational institutions often employ such a policy to address academic or social misconduct in the classroom. UC Davis, for example, allows an instructor to fail a student if proven to have committed academic misconduct such as cheating or plagiarism (UC Davis, 2017). Adopting new strategies such as restorative justice provide greater opportunities to address misconduct in a culturally inclusive manner. Restorative justice is “. . . a process where all stakeholders affected by an injustice have an opportunity to discuss how they have been affected by the injustice and to decide what should be done to repair the harm” (Braithwaite, 2004, p. 28), and evidence suggests that such an approach leads to less recidivism, greater offender accountability, and higher rates of victim satisfaction in the resolution (Sherman & Strang, 2007).

Whether in our student body, faculty, administration, editorial boards, or institutional committees, it is clear that a more inclusive culture is needed to address current diversity concerns in the landscape architecture academy. By extension, greater inclusivity is needed in our definitions of scholarship. There is a growing body of research that speaks to the value of engaged scholarship and the intersections with diversity and inclusion. Much of this evidence can be found in a number of academic journals including *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education*, *Journal of Public Scholarship in Higher Education*, *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, and *Public: A Journal of Imagining America*, among others. There are also resources provided through national organizations, institutes, and centers. Imagining America, for example, is a national organization that promotes publicly engaged scholarship in the arts, humanities, and design. It has been a leader in advancing a national dialogue about engaged scholarship in merit and promotion as well as its intersection with diversity and inclusion. For example, Sturm et al. (2011) provides a framework to integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion with community, public, and civic engagement. This document informed much of the criteria for evaluating an engaged scholarship model for the UC Davis Landscape Architecture program.

If you are interested in these issues, we encourage you to join us and other engaged scholars at the upcoming 2019 CELA conference hosted by UC Davis in Sacramento. The conference's theme on "Engaged Scholarship" provides an opportunity to participate in conversations throughout the conference to address many of these questions and topics. Timothy K. Eatman, a nationally-recognized educator and past co-director of Imagining America, will in his keynote address challenge all of us to reflect on the ethical and practical dimensions of knowledge production and the role that design can play in democratizing our diverse communities of place, identity, and practice. Other sessions will focus on inclusion and equity in design decision-making such as a panel discussion on the use of social media and other technologies to make visible, the often hidden, inequities across the landscape. Participative and other techniques for collective creativity will be employed throughout the CELA conference to elevate engagement toward more democratic and inclusive outcomes in landscape architecture. Let us begin.

ENDNOTE

1. Currently, ASLA surveys do not provide an option for non-binary gender.

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