

**SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES OF  
DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY, CLIMATE AND EQUITY COMMITTEE (DICE)  
2019-2020**

Prepared by Jason Bridges, Philosophy Department Diversity and Climate Liaison

This was the second year of existence of DICE. It was formed as part of the Department's efforts to address the challenges of climate and inclusivity facing the field of Philosophy. Its mandate is to address these challenges within our local philosophical community, and especially as they manifest for undergraduate and graduate students.

The Committee is composed of faculty and graduate students. This year the membership was Melina Garibovic, Aaron Graham, Amy Levine, and Candace Vogler, along with myself. I am especially grateful to the three graduate-student members for giving their time to this important work.

The committee was formed as an experiment. Two years in, I think we can safely say that it has shown its worth. Many of the initiatives described below will have a positive impact upon the life of the department, and no doubt future initiatives will likewise. The members of the committee have been fantastic, and we owe a particular debt of gratitude to our enthusiastic and enormously thoughtful grad student members.

I want to say at the outset, however, that I do not feel we have yet fully succeeded on one important score: namely, achieving a sharp, clear conception of our purview and mandate. I will explain.

Problems of climate and inclusivity, in philosophy as elsewhere are deep-rooted. They are also complicated, with complex interactions among forces at various systemic and interpersonal levels. These problems are not solved (and evidence suggests can be worsened) by such corporate-style palliatives as workplace training. So how are we to conceive the form of intervention that a local institutional player like DICE should take in tackling these problems? In particular, how should we conceive our aims so as to avoid two opposing dangers: on the one hand, having ambitions too grand or diffuse to effectively organize our thinking and activity, and on the other hand, devolving into a practice of rote gestures whose only real effect is to make it seem like the department is 'doing something'?

It is really the job of a committee chair—in this case, me—to achieve clarity on such a question. I don't feel I've yet done so. I encourage the committee to keep its eye on this framing issue as it pursues its various initiatives next year. It may be that the kind of general wisdom I hope for can only arise through continuing to pursue a range of initiatives, and seeing what the committee is best able to accomplish.

One last general note: in addition to chairing DICE, the Diversity and Climate Liaison makes themselves available for meetings with graduate students to discuss individual concerns and challenges, and to help provide solutions, amelioration or support. Since these meetings are confidential (except insofar as the student and liaison need to bring in other institutional resources to find a solution to a given problem) I can't speak in detail about this work in this report. But I can say this: my time in this role has convinced me both that it is very much needed, and that it can provide genuine, tangible benefits to our students on an individual level.

DICE's current initiatives include:

1. *Diversity webpage.* The committee put together a departmental webpage on diversity and climate, including resources, initiatives, and guiding principles and commitments. With the help of William Weaver, it went live this spring.

Special thanks to Aaron for his work on this.

2. *Norms of discussion and community.* The committee wrote a list of departmental norms of discussion and community. In constructing this list, we looked at comparable lists elsewhere, thought about our distinctive commitments and aims, and solicited feedback from students and faculty. I brought drafts of the norms to the faculty on two occasions and made substantial revisions in light of the feedback there received. The norms were completed and made public this spring.

Special thanks to Melina for her work on this.

The norms are not meant as a legally-binding code of ethics. Rather, their point is to codify and publicize the department's commitment to inclusive, fair, friendly and responsible modes of discussion, communication and participation.

They will not serve this purpose very well if they just sit, ignored, on the website. Going forward, the committee should make it part of its regular practice to find regular opportunities to remind the faculty, students, visitors and instructors, of our commitment to these norms.

3. *Lines of communication.* The committee is well-positioned to serve as a gathering station of feedback from students and faculty on matters of climate. A future climate survey might be a part of this information-gathering process. But I have come to think there is more to be gained from direct discussion and interview with interested stakeholders. This is because the give-and-take of a well-conducted conversation can lead to deeper insight into problems and possible solutions.

I spent some time this year and last year talking with Martina Van Haitsma, co-director of the U of C Survey Lab, about the prospect of implementing focus groups of our students and faculty. Ultimately, I decided this was not a feasible course—we lack the resources of time and funding to do this in a serious way.

Instead, the committee embarked this spring on a series of meetings, to be continued next year, in which we invite members of the department to talk about their sense of how things stand in the department on various matters of climate. We met with Maggie Sandholm (current WIP coordinator) and Kate Emden (current co-coordinator of MAP's mentoring work), and plan further meetings in the fall. Very useful ideas have emerged from these conversations.

4. *Faculty-student community-building.* One climate-adjacent concern that has been brought to our attention repeatedly is a sense among grad-students that they have few opportunities for

socializing with the faculty at large. Some faculty attend coffee hours, but the coffee hours are at heart a grad-student-centric affair, funded by the Graduate Council.

Accordingly, we planned to have a series of midday teas in the spring. Jim volunteered to help me organize them. The pandemic put a wrench in our plans. In the fall, DICE, and the Chair, should be thinking about what might serve as a remote substitute for this.

At the suggestion of DICE, Michael did organize a remote meeting at the end of the quarter to discuss graduate-student concerns in the context of the pandemic. Malte, Kevin, Michael, and I were the faculty on on-hand. The meeting was well-attended, and I received feedback from grad students suggesting it was a worthwhile event.

5. *DICE office hours.* To complement the work of the diversity and climate liaison as a point person for handling challenges relating to climate, misconduct, etc., we decided to experiment with our graduate-student committee members holding their own office hours. The thought was that there might be topics or concerns that a graduate student would feel more comfortable broaching, at least initially, with a fellow grad student rather than a faculty member.

This was to begin in the spring, but was forestalled by the pandemic. We plan on proceeding with these office hours, if need be remotely, in the fall.

Special thanks to Amy for conceiving of and working on this idea.

6. *First-year and prospective-week events.* DICE plans to play a role in both the first-year orientation and prospective-week events this coming academic year, to be worked out in consultation with the chair.
7. *Diversity funding.* I suggested to MAP that they apply for an Inclusive Climate grant to support their mentoring work, and they did so, putting together an excellent application. As of a few weeks ago, they had not yet heard if they'd received the money. If not, there are other lines of funding for them to pursue next year.

More generally, the committee should keep working to identifying potential uses for the various grants linked to on our new diversity page.

8. *MAP guide to applying to grad school.* We learned from Kate Emden that MAP is working on a guide for URM undergraduates for applying to grad school. DICE offered its support, and should get involved in this project next year.
9. *University workshops.* Last year, we organized two university-sponsored workshops for the department's faculty and graduate students. One was well-received (especially by graduate students), the other not especially much. (I discuss these reactions in detail in last-year's report.

The well-received workshop was *Hearing One Another*, in which improv techniques are deployed to foster communication. Grad students were especially pleased that faculty had made themselves open to participating in a full-spirited way. We recommend that the

department continue to occasionally participate in this workshop, perhaps on a biannual basis.