



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Report

An Update and a Look Forward

September 2022

The 2021-2022 academic year was marked by significant focus on the school's work around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). We are proud of what has been accomplished—with the commitment of trustees, faculty, staff, students, parents and alumni—and eager to continue the necessary work ahead.

This document serves to offer an update on the school's work around DEI as we enter the new academic year.

We see five critical guiding principles:

1. that this work is inseparable from and in fact flows from the mission of the education of the whole student;
2. that ours is an institution where students learn *how* to think and not what to think, where all voices are heard, and where learning how to reason, question, listen and debate are essential skills;
3. that the work is shaped by our belief that every community member feels they belong and are valued;
4. that the task is not carried by a single leader or office, but is in fact a commitment shared by all;
5. and finally, that it is work, in a school of adolescents that remakes itself every year, which never ends.

We know the challenges—finding time, identifying priorities, problem-solving; etc.—are real and to be expected. However, we feel the passion and commitment in the school community have led to real change and a better Taft. We look forward to continued work ahead.

Board of Trustees: Governance and Training

Following the work of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Planning Committee (DEISPC), the Board of Trustees created a new standing committee, the Community and Belonging Committee (Ernest Kwarteng '98, chair). This committee joins the other standing committees and has been reflected in the By-Laws.

The CBC charge is below:

The Community and Belonging Committee

The Community and Belonging Committee (CBC) is charged to aid in the school's efforts that all community members feel they belong, are valued and can succeed. The Committee will be guided by the school's mission of the education of the whole student, Portrait of the Graduate (POG), and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity (DEI) statement. It will invite community members to meetings—faculty, staff, students and alumni—as deemed appropriate. Further, it will work to inform and educate the Board around issues of community belonging, equity and justice, as well as best practices of secondary school work.

The CBC will serve in an advisory capacity, working closely with school administrators, faculty and staff to understand, monitor, measure and further the school's efforts around community belonging. In order to educate and inform the Board, and to seek insights, suggestions and feedback, it will share updates to the full Board on a regular basis.

During the academic year, the CBC held three meetings, hearing from approximately fifteen faculty members who reported on the areas of campus focus, and then reporting out to the full board. The CBC will continue to meet regularly in 2022-2023.

The Board is committed to regular professional growth relating to DEI, community belonging, and best practices. Meetings during the last year have included presentations from campus leaders, and also workshops led by

outside diversity practitioners from both the educational and corporate spaces.

DEISPC Working Groups Update

Following the DEISPC's work, the school created six focus areas which involved nearly 60 faculty: Admissions, Academics, Alumni Relations, Employees, Student Life, and Resources. During the academic year, eight workgroup meetings were scheduled, with outcomes reported to the faculty, the CBC, and Board of Trustees.

ACADEMICS (Jen Kenerson, Dean of Academic Affairs; Jon Willson, Director of Moorhead Academic Center)

Taft seeks to create an academic experience that teaches students how to think, reason, debate, inquire, question, and listen—and leads to a love of lifelong learning. The focus of this subgroup was the classroom experience, curriculum and pedagogy, and academic outcomes. By using a data-driven review to evaluate the program against internal and external benchmarks, this group can audit student achievement, experience, and support systems more effectively. The goal is to create resources for equity-centered practices, including course design, updates to the existing teacher and course evaluation programs, and opportunities for enhanced faculty training.

Completed To Date:

- ✓ Reviewed and validated completed recommendations from the DEISPC.
- ✓ Drafted and submitted surveys for faculty and students that utilize best inclusive practices and Taft's DEI statement to take an inventory of the teaching faculty's knowledge and overall classroom culture. Survey results are in final stage of review for areas of strengths and growth.
- ✓ Creation of common definitions of inclusivity, microaggression, implicit bias, privilege, intersectionality, and affinity groups.

Ongoing:

- Departmental discussions of alignment of the curricular revision process and DEI social justice (DEISJ) goals, culturally responsive teaching practices, and Taft's Statement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Developing ways to utilize existing teacher/course evaluation programs to gather more student data on their perspective of a teacher's inclusive practices.
- Continued examination of departmental curricula, including review of the DEI departmental audits conducted in 2019 and 2020.

ADMISSIONS (Peter Frew, Director of Admissions; Shavar Bernier, Associate Director of Admissions)

Meeting our mission in the 21st century and preparing graduates for service, citizenship and leadership in the future requires a campus marked by students from diverse experiences. The admissions group is crafting an optimal platform to create the ideal student body, and this includes recruiting and yielding a critical mass of traditionally marginalized students. This work includes additions to their industry-leading practices, transparent goal setting, and discussions about financial aid strategies. Further focus will be given to the efficacy of the application and interview process to capture the DEI understandings of prospective students, as well as the impact of the campus visit, including perceptions of campus spaces and interactions with members of the community.

Completed To Date:

- ✓ Reviewed and validated completed work stated in five major recommendations from the DEISPC Report.
- ✓ Implementation of yield management strategy for domestic students of color resulting in the most diverse incoming class in history.
- ✓ Updated artwork and ambiance of Harley Roberts Room.
- ✓ Including link to the school's DEI statement and Portrait of the Graduate in the interview appointment confirmation.
- ✓ Establishing formal practice of asking prospective students a question

- around community inclusion (while still ensuring the comfort and ease of the interview).
- ✓ Board approved increase in financial aid budget to 26.5% of gross tuition revenue (an increase from 19% in 2001 and 22% in 2006, and 25% in 2018).

Ongoing:

- Discussion about components of a transparent statement of admitting the ideal student body composition.
- Establishing practice of regular anti-bias training and DEI professional growth
- Strategizing yield and retention goals for BIPOC students.
- Continuing discussions with the board Admissions Committee about the financial aid budget and the role it plays in the school's aspirations.
- Brainstorming with the development office about fundraising campaigns focused on affordability.

ALUMNI (Lawrence Crimmins, Director of Development; Christine Afiouni, Director of Alumni Relations; Bonnie Welch, Associate Director of Development)

Ensuring that *all* alumni feel engaged with, connected to, and informed about Taft has always been the goal of the Alumni and Development office. Connecting alumni and raising awareness about DEI work is the central task of this subgroup. The Zoom events during fall 2021 and winter 2022 centered on these goals and were augmented by virtual and on campus events in the spring. Further efforts focused on Alumni Weekend engagement. Coupled with feedback gathering, affinity group work, and creating office resources, such as a mentoring program, this group is focused on engaging alumni in the ongoing DEI work of the school through formal channels and more frequent programming.

Completed To Date:

- ✓ Introduction of Thomas Allen to the Alumni Community Event, October 21, 2021.
- ✓ Taft’s BIPOC Affinity Groups Event (alumni, student leaders, and faculty advisors), part I, November 8, 2021.
- ✓ Taft’s BIPOC Affinity Groups Event, part II, January 13, 2022.
- ✓ Launch of Oral History Project led by the office, trustees, and alumni.
- ✓ School hosted affinity group gatherings at Alumni Weekend and open classes offered by faculty of color.

Ongoing:

- Developing gender-focused, LGBTQ+ focused events in conjunction with Taft’s Gender and Sexuality Alliance.
- Discussion of feedback from BIPOC alumni who are eager to hear from the Board and a process to identify alumni who want to be involved.

EMPLOYEES & HIRING (Edie Traina, Dean of Faculty; Steve Palmer, Associate Dean of Faculty)

We believe that meeting our mission as a relevant and needed school today requires a diverse faculty and staff, and where the school is committed to the support, growth and training of all employees. Advancements during recent years position this subcommittee to continue to expand the school's recruiting strategies and resources. Attracting diverse candidates, investing in DEISJ-centered employee training and professional development, as well as gathering targeted data about employee satisfaction assists in the design of programming and job responsibilities. Benchmarking, transparent accountability, and providing employee-wide resources also underscore this shared work. Efforts in recent years have led to the most diverse incoming “classes” of faculty in school history.

Completed To Date:

- ✓ Reclassified DEISJ-focused summer professional development grants as co-equal priority to graduate work and curriculum development. Set benchmarks for faculty participation, including a review

- mechanism to highlight departments to target for increased engagement.
- ✓ Annual revisions and updates to bias-training for stakeholders involved in the hiring process.
 - ✓ Updated PEG grant and endowed fund descriptions to be gender/race-neutral, as well as excluded outdated verbiage.
 - ✓ Revised exit interview process to include additional prompts and platforms for feedback.
 - ✓ Hiring of new full time BIPOC faculty for the school's counseling office and Moorhead Academic Center.

Ongoing:

- Professional development programming strategy that includes intentionally designed tests of retrieval practice and application of training topics.
- Continued expansion of recruiting sources to attract a diverse candidate pool; creating additional marketing resources specific to hiring.
- Innovating ways to make DEISJ experience an explicit and integral part of the interview process, i.e. interview questions from all interviewers and artifacts from candidates professional experience.
- Addressing strategies for enhanced employee retention based on the areas most commonly cited in exit interview data.
- Designing employee training modules with the goal of creating a comprehensive, yet iterative, curriculum for employees.

STUDENT LIFE: Lindsay Leal, Dean of Students; Erin Duffy, Director of Residential Life; Ozzie Parente, Associate Dean of Students)

Charged to shape healthy, safe, respectful and happy student life and culture, the deans of students' offices seek to ensure that all Taft students feel they belong and are valued. Due to its scope, the organization of this committee is three subgroups: afternoon activities, residential life, and college counseling. The themes of belonging, leadership values, and representation are the lens through which it discusses dormitory programming, inclusive housing

options, student activities, student behavior, monitor selection and training, incident management, and college office operations. Ongoing training, data and feedback collection, and professional development feature prominently in this planning.

Completed To Date:

- ✓ Discussion of the importance of getting students involved to generate more opportunities for “belonging,” including student leadership and training.
- ✓ Redesigning faculty school duty roles and obligations to allow for more varied and inclusive events on the weekends.
- ✓ Review of weekend offerings (outside of typical programming) for students who are far away from home, such as trips to restaurants, markets, and city excursions, etc.

Ongoing, Residential Life:

- Gender Inclusive Housing Initiative and formation of an *ad-hoc* committee of trustees and faculty to explore best practices and issues related to creation of a gender inclusive dorm.
- Discussion of the role of dormitory monitor and revisions to the training program and selection process.
- Examination of the roommate pairing process.

Ongoing, College Counseling

- Professional development (both internal and external) with monthly team meeting topic focused discussion.
- Collaboration with the admissions office to identify first-generation college bound students to create opportunities for (optional) outreach/guidance.
- Discussion of funding for small gap tuition/room/fees situations that make certain colleges/universities a non-starter for Taft students (\$2-5K range) and how Taft could contribute to closing the gap.
- Successful hiring of new college counselor of color effective academic year 2022-2023.

RESOURCES (Jake Odden, Chief Financial Officer; Thomas Allen, Dean of Community, Justice and Belonging)

This group's focus is on budgeting for institutional priorities per the recommendations made by its peer subcommittees. Its focus is on both the high altitude and granular elements of the daily life of the community. Strategizing resources for the support of the office of the dean of community, justice, and belonging, as well as campus planning, school-wide programming, and other deliverables, are the near-term goals. More expansive strategic budgeting will be an outcome of its partnership with campus stakeholders.

This group acknowledges that their work will be driven by the prioritization and feedback from the other workgroups. Specifically, institutional priorities and budgets will require more detailed plans from other sub-committees, as well as the work of this group.

Ongoing:

- Discussion of additional FTE in addition to reallocation of FTE units for program development and delivery; reallocating responsibilities of current employees to support program goals; and, identifying and training specific departmental liaisons.
- A zero-based approach to building the office of the dean of community, justice, and belonging budget for FY23.
- Exploration of spatial planning/resources, and what could be done with more modest levels of capital spending in the near term to improve and enhance use of spaces on campus.

Conclusion

As we hope this report shows, the school continues to work diligently, strategically and passionately to meet our goal that we are a diverse community where every member feels they belong and are valued. The work has been made possible by the commitment of hundreds on and off campus

and is guided both by our historic mission of the education of the whole student and the values of a liberal arts education. Our goal is to enhance and preserve the historic strengths of our great school even as we perpetually seek to evolve and improve. We are a different and better school than we have been, and we are resolved to continue.



William R. MacMullen '78

Head of School



Grant A. Porter '69

Chair, Board of Trustees