

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Bias Plan

Introduction and Background

The Center for Sustainable Urban Development (“CSUD” or the “Center”) works to understand and address critical issues of sustainability, equity and planning in urban environments, through projects and initiatives undertaken by the Center’s thirty-one staff members, researchers, research advisors and affiliates (collectively, the “CSUD Community”) working with over two dozen partner institutions and organizations at [Columbia](#), [nationally](#) and [internationally](#)¹.

CSUD’s mission is to *foster low carbon, healthy, just, sustainable and livable cities*. To be effective, the Center’s work embraces inter-and trans-disciplinary collaborative and engaged knowledge creation, creative use of technologies, networks and open data, all with a practical focus on feeding constructively into impactful projects, programs and policies. A key animating question for the Center is *how to build coalitions and networks as well as support education, communication and outreach to achieve needed institutional and structural change* in the face of poverty, deep inequalities, climate change, environmental damage and injustice.²

Given CSUD’s dedication to building coalitions that will help foster the institutional and structural changes need to overcome inequality, injustice and climate-related threats, the Center has embraced the Climate School’s call for action on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Bias (“DEIA”) and committed itself to:

- Advancing the principles of fairness, social justice and anti-racism;
- Supporting communities in becoming increasingly inclusive, just, respectful and vibrant;

¹ A list and descriptions of CSUD’s nine ongoing projects and initiatives as of May 2022 can be found at [Appendix A](#).

² CSUD addresses this overarching question via a wide variety of research and engagement on specific urban components of this challenge. Components include: growing and improving green public transport, expanding equitable access to it, making urbanized land-use more sustainable including, green building designs and zoning, addressing urban poverty and spatial inequalities, building monitoring systems and data bases around both local pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, meeting the SDGs and climate goals, preparing cities for climate change impacts including extreme heat and building just, sustainable and inclusive cities.



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- Uplifting research, practice and education that benefits all, particularly members of marginalized and vulnerable communities; and,
- Assisting individuals associated with the Center in achieving their full potential.³

Currently, CSUD seeks to advance DEIA in hiring and research topic selection and by encouraging community-engaged, co-learning-based approaches to Center practice. CSUD has also undertaken a number of specific DEIA-related initiatives, which are summarized in [Appendix B](#). Looking to the future, CSUD seeks to support DEIA more comprehensively and effectively by adopting the goals and commitments set forth in the following two sections of this Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Bias Plan (the “Plan”).

I. Goal One: A Just Workplace

CSUD will be an inclusive, welcoming and just workplace where differences are valued, professional development and job growth are encouraged, unfair bias of any sort will not be tolerated and everyone in the CSUD community is inspired, energized, empowered, respected and supported in their connections with the Center and with one another.

CSUD will work to implement this goal by:

- Establishing a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Bias Committee (“DEIA Committee”) which will meet regularly and formulate recommendations for improving the Center’s internal organizational culture, developing transparent and inclusive structures and systems and ensuring equitable internal policies.
- Ensuring that DEIA is fully considered in all of the Center’s hiring, promotional and committee membership decisions.
- Notifying all members of the CSUD Community of DEIA-related training opportunities and seeking funding to support their professional development in this and other areas.
- Acknowledging and celebrating the rich cultural diversity of the CSUD Community and working to build connections within the Community in order to advance the Center’s DEIA goals.
- Seeking guidance from the CSUD Community when formulating Center policy and giving input to the Climate School on strategic and operational issues.
- Working to provide compensation for CSUD Community members doing committee work and undertaking projects designed to support the development of the Center or the Climate School as a whole.
- Ensuring that CSUD Leadership is trained in and attuned to DEIA-related

³ See, [The Columbia Climate School's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Bias](#).



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considerations such as inclusive decision-making, systemic power inequities, skill building and education, communications/language, mediation and conflict and restorative justice.

- Regularly evaluating CSUD's performance in connection with its DEIA goals and commitments and benchmarking, updating and improving this Plan as needed.

II. Goal Two: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Bias Will be Core Values in All CSUD Research, Teaching and Practice

CSUD will seek to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-bias as core values in its research, teaching and practice, in order to more effectively support just, equitable and climate-safe cities.

The Center will work to implement this goal by:

- Developing and uplifting research, teaching and practice that can benefit historically marginalized groups inequitably impacted by environmental issues, reduce historic environmental harms and allocate environmental benefits more equitably.
- Supporting efforts by historically excluded groups to play a truly meaningful and effective role in government decisionmaking on equity- and sustainability-related issues. As part of this commitment, the Center will seek to identify power imbalances in decision making processes, foster structural changes to increase the fairness and inclusiveness of those processes and, where appropriate, identify and support alternative, community-led planning initiatives.
- Ensuring that the CSUD Community's research, teaching and practice is respectful, authentic and non-extractive in its interactions with partners, by providing appropriate funding support for such activities and being mindful of how the Center's work may affect its partners' capacity to accomplish their own goals.
- Seeking input from external partners and research subjects to help CSUD better support diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-bias in its research, teaching and practice.
- Advancing Columbia's [Fourth Purpose](#) by engaging in *directed action* designed to "build new collaborations and more broadly galvanize scholarship and meaningful activity that addresses significant human problems" through the work of the Center.

III. Summary and Next Steps

Through the goals and commitments described above, CSUD expects to become a



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more thorough and effective supporter of the Climate School's DEIA Commitments, strengthen its research, teaching and practice and help each member of the CSUD Community achieve their scholarly and professional goals.

In early May, this draft Plan will be shared with members of the CSUD Community who have expressed interest in supporting the Center's DEIA initiative, to help ensure that the goals and commitments set forth in the two preceding sections of the Plan are well chosen and formulated and that the list of DEIA projects provided in Appendix B is complete.

The Plan will then be revised and shared in final draft form with all members of the CSUD Community, who will be invited to provide input and express interest in joining the DEIA Committee and/or otherwise assisting with Plan implementation.

Once the Plan has been fully reviewed and any appropriate changes have been made, the DEIA Committee will be constituted and the Center will move to implement the agreed-upon DEIA Goals and Commitments in the Plan.

The DEIA Committee will be an essential partner in Plan implementation. For example, during the first year after the Plan has been adopted, the Committee will develop strategies, time horizons and illustrative metrics for each of the Plan's goals and commitments. Additionally and as needed, the DEIA Committee will provide updates to the CSUD Community about DEIA-related developments and opportunities.

Finally, CSUD will continue to work with leadership at the Climate School and in its other centers and networks, to assure that the Center is learning from these colleagues and sharing its own DEIA-related experiences and insights with them.

This Plan will be updated to include the strategies, time horizons and illustrative metrics recommended by the DEIA Committee during the first year after its adoption. A report on the status of Plan implementation efforts and any recommendations for additional revisions to the Plan will also be provided by the DEIA Committee on an annual basis.



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Appendix A - CSUD Projects

[Accelerating the SDGs](#) - The aim of this three stage project is to help accelerate awareness and take-up of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) worldwide among individuals and groups in the urban professions, education and civil society.

[The American Lead Map Collaboratory](#) - The American Lead Map is a collaborative community-based research initiative to create the nation's first crowd-sourced open online map identifying toxic lead hazards in American cities, integrating data from cities in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

[Digital Matatus/Transport and Equity: A Smart Approach](#) - What would smart sustainable transport look like in the case of Nairobi, East Africa's largest metropolis and economic hub? In particular, which cultural, political and technological access points might improve the existing public transportation system and how can citizens -- particularly the poorer majority -- be more involved in shaping and designing solutions to transportation issues in their cities?

[People Building Better Cities](#) - A traveling exhibition, People Building Better Cities consisted of 23 panels and was shown in ten countries and 18 cities between 2013-15, including at World Urban Forum 7 in Medellin, Colombia and at the Union of International Architects Congress in Durban, South Africa.

[Environmental Justice and Climate Just Cities Network](#) - An overarching goal is to inform the underlying value system, operating model, research and curriculum of the Earth Institute and the Columbia University Climate School and beyond to make our institutions more responsive to the critical, urgent social and environmental demands of this moment. We also support the direct application of climate just approaches to the implementation of urban policy, advocacy, planning and programs.

[Resilient Coastal Communities Project](#) - The Resilient Coastal Communities Project seeks to foster actionable, equitable solutions to flood risks along with complementary benefits like habitat restoration, job creation and more empowered communities.

[Urban Heritage, Sustainability and Social Inclusion](#) - This collaborative project of CSUD, the Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation and The American Assembly, examines historic preservation as a sustainable and socially-inclusive urban policy tool.



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Appendix B

Current DEIA Commitments and Initiatives at CSUD⁴

Through the following activities, CSUD is working to align with and support the Climate School's DEIA goals:

- CSUD is a founding member of the **Environmental and Climate Just Cities Network (EJCJC)**. CSUD Co-Director Jackie Klopp is an EJCJC co-chair. EJCJC also supported the justice focussed urban heat mapping work of [Liv Yoon with South Bronx Unite](#) and a pilot experiment in measuring knowledge acquisition around anti-racism in Thad Pawlowski's urban planning class on climate resiliency in New York City.

EJCJC has also developed [a website](#) to provide a central meeting site and resources from students, faculty and community partners working on environmental and climate justice. The network is planning to co-produce a Climate Justice primer to support curriculum in this area.

- Jackie Klopp was also centrally involved in the search for a **climate justice post-doc**, who will spend 25% of their time on DEIA.
- CSUD is implementing two **Climate School DEIA grants**:
 - the first, under the auspices of the EJCJC, will support creation of an **NPCC internship program** that will actively employ an anti-racist recruitment strategy (partnering with NPCC co-chair/EJCJC co-chair, Christian Braneon).
 - the second, under the auspices of the Resilient Coastal Communities Project and its partner, the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, has interviewed 10 climate justice leaders in and around NYC in order to identify public policy reforms that will **foster more effective and inclusive resiliency planning** and assure community-based organizations have the resources necessary to participate fully in such planning work.
- CSUD has facilitated the work of affiliated researcher Dr. Erica Avrami at GSAPP in holding symposia and producing publications as part of the [Urban Heritage, Sustainability and Social Inclusion](#) initiative and developing a set of [anti-racist historic preservation resources](#), which will be presented at EJCJC.

This initiative underscores a critical and underserved dimension of environmental/climate justice work: the importance of understanding how injustice is embedded and repeated in institutions, policies, landscapes and built

⁴ As of April 22, 2022.



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environments *over time*. These longitudinal perspectives and approaches to research seek to interrogate the foundations of systemic racism and other forms of exclusion, so as to challenge those foundations, recognize the cumulative effects on diverse publics and promote restorative justice.

- CSUD staff and affiliates (Jackie Klopp, Paul Gallay, Elliott Sclar, Joyce Klein-Rosenthal) have cooperated with CSUD affiliate Erica Avrami on her justice-focused studio courses at GSAPP, including:
 - Environmental and Climate Justice in Harlem: Interrogating Environmental Histories through Preservation (Spring 2022);
 - [The Harlem Renaissance: Preservation, Spatial Encounter and Anti-Racism](#) (Spring 2021);
 - [Red Hook, Brooklyn: Equitable Resilience through Preservation](#) (Spring 2020);
 - [Heritage and Sustainable Urbanization: Freetown, Sierra Leone](#) (Fall 2019);
 - [The Columbia Community: Promoting Social Inclusion through Preservation](#) (Spring 2019)
- CSUD (Jackie Klopp) with center for Resilient Landscapes and Cities (Thad Pawlowski, Johanna Loveccio) and EJCJC co-chair Christian Braneon received an **Office of the Provost Addressing Racism Seed Grant** which was used to work with Blackspace to engage in anti-racism in planning workshops.
- CSUD also supported researcher Dr. Robbie Parks in his partnership with WEACT. Robbie (with Jackie Klopp and Joyce Rosenthal) received an Earth Institute Seed grant to work on issues associated with [extreme heat risks and barriers to accessing public space](#) during COVID.
- CSUD staff have engaged in **DEIA training** organized by the Masters Program in Sustainability Management and also are taking the master class in indigenous environmental justice organized by the Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life.
- Jackie Klopp is a member of the **Undergraduate Curriculum Committee**, where she works to center DEIA and social justice.
- Jackie Klopp and CSUD researcher Paul Gallay are co-mentors on the DEIA-focused NSF funded **Summer Research Experience** for Undergraduates and Educators led by AC4.
- Jackie Klopp and Paul Gallay are entering into discussions with their Resilient Coastal Communities Project partners, the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, about the idea of a campus *Environmental And Climate Justice Bootcamp*, led by NY-EJA, that would train prospective student interns on environmental and climate justice issues and support the mainstreaming of environmental and climate justice concerns into our educational institutions.