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## Center for Social Equity + Inclusion Action Plan

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# WEACTIONS



RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN **SOCIAL EQUITY INCLUSION** ACTION PLAN



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**“We embrace difference—the very distinctiveness that makes each member of the community a valued contributor to life and work at RISD.”**

**Rosanne Somerson / President**

# STUDENT



# SOCIAL EQUITY INCLUSION

## VISION

Art and design have far-reaching capacities for generating shared language and connecting people and communities. The creative forms we study at RISD offer powerful means for conveying ideas and shaping experiences across habituated boundaries. Today we see those forms resonate more than ever before in the multilingual, culturally heterogeneous, digitally interconnected spaces around the globe. In fact, the democratization of communications media has made it possible for long marginalized voices to join and substantively transform our public discourses. The resulting body of critical knowledge has focused attention on interlocking systems of privilege and disenfranchisement entrenched throughout our social institutions, including those of higher education. In response, numerous institutions have worked to counteract the systemic forces of bias and inequality, but these efforts have produced, more often than not, only limited effects, especially when seen in the context of more rapid cultural changes in society at large. This differential between intent and outcomes has added a new level of urgency to the conversation on issues of diversity, identity, inclusion, access, agency, and equity in the halls of American higher education. The following Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI) Action Plan provides the RISD community with an historic opportunity to carefully and systematically address those issues, and realize a forward-looking example for other institutions to follow.

# THE SCHOOL OF DESIGN



**“We all struggle out of fear of our differences, and ignoring our social injustices comes too easily to us. Only in acknowledging our fears in an intimate and safe way can we begin to accept ourselves and move towards collective social change.”**

—Kate Reed / BRDD ID '21

## **Current Initiatives**

Based on strong student demand and extended deliberation with stakeholders throughout RISD, the SEI Action Plan describes how our institutional frameworks for teaching, learning, creative expression, and academic scholarship can best incorporate the core principles of inclusion, equal opportunity, and full respect for all members of the community. The provisions of the plan will enable us to coordinate a series of current initiatives and new actions designed to:

- Make social equity and inclusion integral to our structures and processes—“built in, not bolted on.”
- Foster a campus culture of inclusion that welcomes difference, promotes student agency, and facilitates shared community-building.
- Increase the pace of demographic diversification in our student, faculty, and staff populations.
- Make access to RISD more equitable across a range of diverse social constituencies.
- Ensure that all students have the support they need for equal access to the entirety of the RISD educational experience.
- Add academic offerings and co-curricular opportunities for engaging further with global perspectives and a more expansive spectrum of creative cultures, practices, and competencies.
- Support experiential learning beyond the classroom and studio.
- Develop the institutional capacities to proactively engage with ongoing social, economic, demographic, and cultural change.



## “Art is always we, never me.”

— Emory Douglas, at RISD January 2017

As an institution geared for innovation and leadership, RISD has refined a proven educational model that asks our students to make significant and lasting contributions to the societies in which we live. We issue this call to action precisely because art and design can have so much influence on how we relate to one another and to the world around us, because those forms give us the agency to effect change. Our mission links artistic and scholarly achievement with social impact, and it is this intimate connection that provides the SEI Action Plan with its intellectual foundation and moral authority.

Any learning environment that prizes the progressive development of creative and academic skills needs diversity as an essential catalyst, not only in its student population but also in the composition of its faculty and staff. There is much research to support this axiom, but we also know from first-hand experience that the dynamic interaction of many different voices and points of view stimulates the processes of learning, analysis, problem-solving, and collaboration. It prompts critical questioning of received ideas, encourages new thinking, opens up pathways for innovation, and elevates our overall culture of creativity and scholarship.

Building genuine diversity hinges on a fundamental ethos of inclusiveness. Most immediately, it means seeking out qualified artists and designers from historically underrepresented constituencies, and welcoming the breadth of creative talent, life experience, and cultural perspective they offer. But a culture of inclusion also requires us to confront the systems that deny or restrict social access on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic class, gender, sexuality, spiritual practice, disability, and age, among other characteristics. Those systems of bias have no place at RISD and we do not tolerate discrimination against any class of people or any sociocultural identity. Instead, we embrace difference—the very distinctiveness that makes each member of the community a valued contributor to life and work at RISD.

For us to celebrate a multitude of diverse social identities and, at the same time, come together as part of a cohesive, collaborative institution, we must recognize that our respective identities represent complex, multifaceted, constantly evolving histories. These differences filter lived experience in specific ways that are not always transparent to others, and mediate our participation in larger discourses, institutions, and cultures. Yet those very differences also offer sites for productive engagement, new channels for exchange and collaboration, mutual learning and growth. They constitute the reference points and building blocks for the inclusive community-making that the SEI Action Plan envisions.

**“Intentionally  
fostering  
cultural  
mediation  
aligns with  
knowing the  
basic principles  
of our humanity.”**

— Alicia Luzón / Human Resources

Looking outward, we still have to account for the hard socioeconomic and cultural stratifications that continue to limit access to higher education and professional development for many communities, in some instances more onerously than ever before. The SEI Action Plan sets out to place education at RISD within reach of a larger, more diverse pool of talented students, in particular those in constituencies that are underrepresented in the fields of art and design. Importantly, the plan also specifies continuing action to ensure that all students who do attend RISD have the support they need to enjoy equal access to the full range of the educational opportunities we provide, both in and out of the classroom. This includes participating in the richness of communal life on campus, which is an indispensable, highly generative part of experiential learning at RISD.

While the SEI Action Plan includes specific initiatives and commitments, the goals we set as an institution and the challenges we face, both internally and externally, require a persistent effort to reflect, to critique, to keep learning, and, when needed, to change. There is no simple checklist to fulfill because this work looks to bring about an overall institutional agility that can process constant, fast-moving changes in the economic, demographic, political, and technological conditions around us. Fostering equity at RISD will always be less about solving a particular problem or correcting a specific wrong than about the fundamental, overarching dedication to sustaining the kind of community and culture in which every single individual feels sincerely valued as a contributing member, and has the opportunity and support to excel as a creative practitioner with a unique voice and point of view.

It is essential to emphasize that our work on social equity and inclusion, as articulated here, is not in any way separate from RISD’s core mission as an academic and cultural institution. Our express goal is for diversity, inclusion, and equity to be built into the very institutional architecture of RISD, and not “bolted on” as an afterthought. In fact, SEI initiatives will constitute an integral component of our next Institutional Strategic Plan, especially since this current effort is designed to have fundamental and enduring effects on how RISD functions—that is, how we teach and learn, how we create and collaborate and support each other, how we build community.



## FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

In February of 2016, I charged a committee, the Social Equity Action Plan Working Group, to develop a set of recommendations for an institutional plan for diversity, inclusion, and equity, as well as a mechanism for the RISD community to provide feedback in response to the committee, the volume and quality of which has been remarkable. Together, the Working Group’s initial recommendations and the ensuing feedback establish the principal goals and means of the Social Equity and Inclusion Action Plan presented here.

In their report, the Working Group furnished the following principles to clarify the issues at stake and articulate the exact scope and intent of their recommendations:

### **Diversity**

We are committed to a learning environment that respectfully engages both the individual and sociocultural differences that comprise the complexity of our current social and historical context: race, ethnicity, socioeconomic standing, gender, sexuality, belief systems, disability, and age, along with their intersections. Central to this commitment to diversity is an understanding of the complex histories, expressions, and needs of different identities and communities, as well as their intersectionality (though which corollary systems of discrimination and oppression—racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, xenophobia, ableism—mutually reinforce each other), so that we are better attuned to the multidimensional characteristics of the mechanisms that produce marginalization and social inequality.

### **Inclusion**

As a community, we are committed to an active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity so that all members of our community are duly recognized, heard, supported, and able to participate in the creative, intellectual, and communal life of RISD. We recognize that forms of inclusion must be practiced and supported throughout the institution both inside and outside the classroom: in our curricular and co-curricular environments and opportunities, in our faculty and staff communities, in the range of engagements and professional opportunities we offer in the world beyond RISD, and in our material structures and communications systems. We also emphasize that this engagement must be rigorous, thoughtful, and practiced in ways that increase knowledge of culturally specific content, critical thinking, and a nuanced understanding of the systemic and institutional forces that shape identity today.

**“Inherited ideological positions can cause us to render obscure our own complacency towards and collusion with oppressive systems of power. However, these positions need not be static; we can actually evolve in our thinking and in turn evolve in our actions.”**

— Lisi Raskin / Associate Professor  
Department Head / SC

### **Equity**

We recognize that a genuinely rich and diverse learning environment consists of groups that bring different experiences, viewpoints, and talents to the community, and that we cannot adopt a “one-size-fits-all” approach if we are to ensure that members of varying backgrounds and life experiences have the specific means of support and guidance they need to thrive at RISD. In short, different members of our community need different types of support.

As a community, we must take decisive, concrete, and sustained action to address the systemic marginalization of certain groups (historical legacies of oppression based on race and class, for example) that continues to limit their access to and participation in higher education. We also recognize the need to better address the particular concerns of our growing international student population.

In order to provide truly equal opportunity to all members of our community, we must work on diversifying our effective means of support, which include pedagogy and evaluation methods that account for different learning modes, contexts, and skills, and the combination of mentoring, advising, and financial aid tailored for the specific circumstances of each student’s identity and background.

**“I’ve always felt that what every human wants is simply to be seen. Seeing leads to understanding, appreciating, and recognizing ourselves in each other. We are living in a critical time where seeing each other is more important than ever.”**

— Nicole Buchanan / PH '15



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# **ACTION PLAN**

**The Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI)  
Action Plan consists of a series of action items  
organized within seven key categories:**

- I. Leadership, Reporting, and Accountability**
- II. Community Diversity**
- III. Affordability and Access**
- IV. Academics**
- V. Institutional Operations**
- VI. Community and Co-Curricular Engagement**
- VII. Community Wellness**



## **I. Leadership, Reporting, and Accountability**

Although RISD has launched a series of interconnected initiatives designed to foster diversity, inclusion, and equity throughout the college and museum, no integrated leadership structure is currently in place to plan, direct, and monitor these efforts. The work of cultivating a genuinely diverse and inclusive institution, defined by equality of access and opportunity, is inherently complex, multilayered, and dynamic—subject to constant assessment and adjustment. It requires both centralized leadership and a strong and coherent vision for coordinating the different components of our plan at the macro and micro levels. The following actions will establish such a structure.

### **1. Office of Social Equity and Inclusion**

RISD will create a dedicated Office of Social Equity and Inclusion to coordinate multiple initiatives and programs across the whole institution. This new office will house two high-level staff positions: a Vice President of Social Equity and Inclusion and a Senior Social Equity Fellow. The unit will have a permanent space on campus, an operating budget, and will include meeting and work space, reference resources, and a place to visibly publicize SEI programs.

#### **1.1. Vice President of Social Equity and Inclusion**

The Vice President of Social Equity and Inclusion (VP of SEI) will be charged with realizing a comprehensive, progressive vision for equity and inclusive community-building at RISD. The VP of SEI will guide and coordinate all institution-wide efforts aimed at making our community more demographically diverse and welcoming of difference, and ensuring that all students—of all cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds—have the access, opportunity, and support they need to benefit fully from the RISD educational experience. Reporting to the President as a member of the President’s Cabinet, the new VP will determine that the consideration of equity and inclusion is built into all of our structures and processes with sufficient rigor and accountability. As a champion for lasting cultural change, the individual in this position will collaborate with all areas of the institution to develop ambitious SEI goals, practices, and measurable outcomes, such as increasing the diversity of our student, faculty, and staff populations, and making RISD more accessible to members of underserved communities. This work includes setting metrics for SEI initiatives, tracking their implementation, and documenting the results on a regular basis. In addition, the VP of SEI will provide expertise and counsel to RISD senior leadership and key stakeholders on all relevant programs, initiatives, and partnerships.

To fill this position, RISD will begin a national search during the Fall 2017 semester.

### **1.1.1. Divisional, Departmental, and Area SEI Action Plans**

We will require each academic department and staff unit to develop its own action plan addressing social equity and inclusion. The VP of SEI will guide this process, meeting with representatives of each area to map out the respective plans, their timelines, implementation strategies, and periodic progress reviews. These plans will be incorporated into existing area reviews, self-studies, and academic program reviews.

The departmental integration of SEI will be supported by all members of the President's Cabinet, the Associate Provost/Dean of Faculty, the Dean of Student Affairs, and the Vice President of Human Resources.

Every divisional, departmental, and area action plan will be shared with the community upon approval by both the Office of SEI and the responsible academic and staff unit. Each individual plan will be updated periodically and its implementation tracked continuously.

### **1.1.2. Social Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council**

In order to bring voices from different RISD constituencies into the making of institutional equity and inclusion policies, the VP of SEI will appoint and chair an Advisory Council drawn from full- and part-time faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students. The VP of SEI, in consultation with the President and the Cabinet, will formulate the specific responsibilities of this council. These may include:

- Providing a regular forum for representatives of the RISD community to directly address issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity.
- Assessing the implementation of the institutional and departmental SEI Action Plans.
- Monitoring and analyzing RISD's "campus climate," as reflected in periodic surveys.
- Making recommendations to the VP of SEI, the President, and the Cabinet as part of liaising between the community at large and senior leadership.
- Initiating and facilitating cross-institutional dialogue and communication.
- Contributing to the development and maintenance of content on the SEI website (see I.1.3 below).

The Vice President of Social Equity and Inclusion will convene this Advisory Council within the first year in office.

### **1.2. Senior Social Equity Fellow**

The VP of SEI will be supported by a Senior Social Equity Fellow, a term faculty position at the level of Associate Professor. This position will collaborate with the Department of Teaching + Learning in Art + Design and Academic Affairs to shape pedagogy and curricula for connecting the RISD learning experience with a diversity of cultural viewpoints and socioeconomic backgrounds, especially those historically underrepresented in higher education and art and design practice.

Other responsibilities will include: helping to diversify the selection of visiting artists, designers, and scholars; assisting the VP of SEI to oversee faculty and staff training and development opportunities in collaboration with the Associate Provost/Dean of Faculty; and creating new areas of student programming in association with Student Affairs. Furthermore, the Senior Social Equity Fellow will be expected to teach, mentor faculty and staff, coordinate with Orientation planners to raise SEI awareness during Orientation, and help link SEI-related programming during Orientation with the first-year curriculum.

The Senior Social Equity Fellow will report jointly to the Associate Provost/Dean of Faculty and the Vice President for Social Equity and Inclusion.

### **1.3. Social Equity and Inclusion Website**

Collaborating with RISD Media, the Office of SEI will develop a custom-designed, content-rich, regularly updated SEI website to keep the community, as well as external audiences, apprised of the provisions of this plan and ongoing SEI initiatives at RISD, and to promote the overall vision of SEI. The site will provide information on events, programming, and other resources as determined by the Office of SEI.

In parallel, the Office of SEI and RISD Media will create presentational versions of the institution-wide SEI Action Plan and related divisional and departmental plans, and make them readily available to the community.

## **2. Diversity Fellows Program**

We will continue the Diversity Fellows Program for the 2017–18 academic year, after which it will be re-evaluated by the VP of SEI. Currently housed in Academic Affairs, this program will host annual artist-in-residence positions for focusing on issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity in contemporary creative practice.

Alongside this program and new Senior Social Equity Fellow faculty position (see I.1.2 above), the SEI Action Plan specifies a third fellowship category to increase the diversity of our faculty and visiting artists. That position, a term appointment, will be filled each year through the AICAD Postgraduate Teaching Fellows Program (see item II.4 below).

### **3. Discrimination/Bias Reporting and Resolution**

As a significant addition to our current processes confronting discrimination in any form, RISD will implement a new reporting procedure for individuals to register claims of discrimination and/or bias on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, age, religion, or political affiliation. This reporting procedure is under development by Student Affairs and Academic Affairs in consultation with Human Resources and the General Counsel.

Alongside this effort, the Office of SEI will work with constituencies throughout the community to examine our existing practices for resolving discrimination/bias complaints; analyze those processes in light of current themes and trends in this field; and develop improvements where needed. Moreover, we will review our anti-retaliation policies to make sure that those who encounter discrimination have the necessary protections to come forward without fear of reprisal.

RISD will embed the new reporting procedure as part of an integrated, institution-wide process to respond to and resolve discrimination/bias incidents in a way that balances the timely review of complaints with the rigorous, transparent, and accountable adjudication of each incident. To do so, we will establish firm, even-handed, clearly articulated guidelines for assessing, adjudicating, and resolving all complaints, in keeping with all relevant RISD governance practices. Our goal is for this process to allow for community-based, proactive, positive-response models, such as training and mediation, to help resolve cases of discrimination when such outcomes are deemed appropriate.

The effectiveness of the discrimination reporting and resolution process will depend on its transparency and on how well the community is informed of the principles, methods, and legal requirements by which it will operate. It will be incumbent on all relevant RISD units to communicate this information consistently through the SEI website and other channels on campus.

### **4. Annual Training for Senior Leadership**

In order to successfully guide and implement SEI plans across the institution, RISD's senior leadership must stay abreast of current best practices in this relatively nascent area of policy. To this end, the President, members of the President's Cabinet, and other key leaders at RISD will participate in intensive diversity, inclusion, and equity training courses.

## 5. Annual SEI Development Day and Ongoing Professional Development

The Office of SEI, along with Human Resources and Academic Affairs, will host an annual Development Day to engage the extended RISD community, as well as relevant outside partners, in dialogues and exchanges on the important roles of equity, inclusion, and diversity in education at all levels, and, increasingly, in the various professional branches of art and design.

This day-long program will feature speakers, workshops, training sessions, and other activities. As in the 2016–17 academic year, this event will be scheduled on a non-class work day.

Additionally, ongoing development sessions will be implemented throughout the year for faculty and staff as a key component of our current commitment to professional development.

## II. Community Diversity

An institution's values are expressed through the community it fosters—through the many different voices, experiences, and intellectual frameworks it brings together and empowers to effect change in the world. We have made significant progress in recent years in building greater diversity in our community. Many areas, including Academic Affairs, Human Resources, and Enrollment, have initiated extraordinary work to evolve our institutional structures and the composition of our community. Examples of this effort include changing the language in all faculty searches to emphasize diverse perspectives and inclusive teaching practices; placing Diversity Champions on search committees; setting higher expectations for building a more diverse student population; attracting and supporting greater numbers of first-generation college applicants; and refining our reporting categories in admissions and enrollment for better demographic accuracy. But we also are resolutely committed to doing much more to recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff from historically underrepresented groups, including those from outside the United States.

The imperative is both ethical and pedagogical. It is our clear conviction that quality education is one of the most important channels for social empowerment and cultural transformation in dynamic societies. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us, as leaders and innovators, to make the benefits of the RISD educational experience available to a broader demographic cross-section of talented artists, designers, and creative thinkers than in previous generations, whose access was restricted by overlapping racial, cultural, social, and economic barriers and biases. At the same time, greater diversity—not only in the student population, but also in the constitution of our faculty and administrative leadership—substantially enhances the quality of the learning environment we construct for our students. As much

recent research demonstrates, learning and creative production are most effective in communities defined by a diversity of perspectives, a variety of backgrounds, and supportive peer groups consisting of many different social identities.

This SEI Action Plan is designed to accelerate the pace of diversification throughout RISD. The VP of SEI, in conjunction with the President's Cabinet, will be charged with setting diversity goals that are both ambitious in their intent and measurable in practice. Actions include:

### **1. Student Recruitment Plan**

The overall success of student recruitment will be measured in part by its diversity, in particular the demographic makeup of U.S.-based students coming to RISD. The Vice President of Enrollment Management, in collaboration with the VP of SEI, will be responsible for developing and implementing a plan that continues to raise the diversity of incoming students. This plan will include careful consideration of where and how we recruit students, and a commitment to increasing financial aid in line with the specific objectives of the plan.

### **2. Search Committee Diversity Plans and Training**

All new faculty and staff searches will incorporate specific diversity plans for attracting a wide cross-section of candidates—a pool that includes candidates from historically underrepresented groups in each hiring area. The Provost will be responsible for ensuring the consideration of diversity in faculty searches. Human Resources will be responsible for supporting best hiring practices for staff. Importantly, all faculty and staff search committees will receive training in order to mitigate unconscious bias, and to increase excellence.

### **3. Diversity Champions Program**

First introduced in 2014, Diversity Champions are advisors trained by Human Resources to help search committees implement strategies for recruiting diverse pools of candidates. We will expand this program, training more Diversity Champions to be available to advise and assist faculty and staff search committees.

### **4. AICAD Postgraduate Teaching Fellows Program**

RISD will continue to participate in the Postgraduate Teaching Fellows Program instituted by the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD). Designed to increase faculty diversity at associated colleges, the Postgraduate Teaching Fellows Program enables outstanding AICAD graduate alumni from historically underrepresented communities to build professional experience at the highest levels of art and design education. This program brings exceptional master's-level graduates to RISD for one-year faculty appointments.



### III. Affordability and Access

As part of the drive to diversify our community, we have made important progress during the last few admissions cycles by expanding our ability to offer strong aid packages to students with financial need. In the 2016–17 admissions cycle, we provided scholarships to the highest percentage to date of students with demonstrated financial need, thanks to robust fundraising and the reprioritization of funds. For the first time in RISD history, we awarded aid in the form of grants and scholarships to 100 percent of domestic first-year and transfer undergraduate students with demonstrated financial need—up from 94.8 percent in the previous cycle and 73.6 percent five years ago. In 2015-16, the most recent period for comparative financial aid data, RISD offered a higher average award to first-time, full-time domestic undergraduates than any of our peer institutions.

Continuing to increase financial aid will be a central pillar of our equity, inclusion, and diversity commitment since college affordability remains one of the most pressing challenges in the current national landscape, with income inequality and student debt rising to unprecedented heights. This is why the socioeconomic dimension of what we understand as diversity is absolutely essential to building the artistically vibrant community of many voices that this SEI Action Plan envisions. Scholarships, fellowships, internships, and other forms of aid are the key vehicles here for opening up more access and opportunity for students with financial need, in particular those from social groups historically underrepresented in art and design.

Our challenge, however, does not end with enrollment. We must ensure that all admitted students, once they arrive on campus, continue to have equal access to the entire spectrum of the RISD experience—that each artist and designer has the necessary support to be able to benefit from the creative learning and professional development opportunities we offer.

To bolster affordability and access, the SEI Action Plan maps out the following increases in funding, as well as the refinement of our existing Student Planning platform:

#### 1. Institutional Allocations to Financial Aid

##### 1.1. Grants and Scholarships

Over the past five years, RISD has steadily increased the amount and rate of financial aid it assigns to students with demonstrated need, as represented in terms of the percentage of the overall need. Unequivocally, our goal is to make RISD more accessible to talented students with financial need by lowering the cost of education through grants and scholarships, not by adding to the national problem of spiraling debt. To work toward this goal, we will continue to increase the allocation of institutional resources to financial aid, which, in turn, will require significant new fundraising.

Our next Institutional Strategic Plan will model and set specific financial aid targets for meeting a progressively larger average share of student need through grants and scholarships, up to 100 percent of demonstrated financial need. In the interim, we will continue to commit to offering financial aid packages to every admitted domestic undergraduate who qualifies for need-based aid.

## **1.2. Social Equity Funds**

While tuition, room and board, and fees can be addressed primarily through scholarships, the full participation of every student in creative and academic life at RISD can still be hampered by a lack of individual and/or family resources. In 2016, we began fundraising to provide support for students with added financial need through Social Equity Funds, which are allocated to the Materials Fund, the Travel and Study Abroad Fund, Sponsored Internships, and Project Thrive. In the first three areas, these resources help students obtain required art supplies and other materials, pursue international learning opportunities, and participate in unpaid internships. We also increased funding for Project Thrive, a program of individualized mentoring designed to help first-generation college students acclimate to campus life and succeed in their academic and creative pursuits.

Under the new SEI Action Plan, we will expand fundraising for Social Equity Funds and continue each of the four component programs. Furthermore, we will publicize clear guidelines for the distribution of these funds, effectively throughout the community at large and in training sessions for key administrators and faculty.

## **1.3. College Preparation Programs**

It is widely understood that students who have access to art and design mentorship and portfolio development in high school are more likely to be able to complete competitive applications for undergraduate admission to top art schools like RISD. Such access is by no means equally available to all of our applicants, some of whom are disadvantaged not necessarily by their artistic and intellectual abilities, but because of a lack of guidance, preparation, and support in their secondary schools. In keeping with our goal of recruiting the most promising artists we can identify, we will continue to reach out to talented students in underserved districts and provide them with the early mentorship they need prior to applying to highly selective undergraduate programs such as ours.

To make strong college preparation more accessible to a diverse range of high school students, we have focused on two highly successful RISD programs. In the past year, we initiated the provision of nine need-based scholarships in our Pre-College Continuing Education (CE) Program. In addition, we raised significant support for Project Open Door, a program offers that free preparatory art courses to creatively inclined students in Rhode Island's urban-core public high schools and charter high schools. Since many of the scholarship students in Pre-College and their counterparts in Project Open Door eventually apply



to RISD, these college preparation programs play a significant role in bringing greater diversity to our own undergraduate applicant pool across a broader socio-economic range (including our local communities). The SEI Action Plan looks to build on these existing structures by:

- Increasing fundraising to provide ongoing need-based scholarships to RISD Pre-College, covering tuition, room and board, transportation, materials, and mentoring.
- Developing a sustainable budget and funding model that will enable us to not only continue Project Open Door, but expand it. This work is already underway. An expansion of Project Open Door would not only connect it with Providence’s internationally recognized youth arts organizations, but also explore new models of program delivery in strategic locations beyond our immediate region.

#### **1.4. Resource-Sharing and Reallocation Initiatives**

We will support successful programs developed and implemented by Student Affairs to provide resources that assist students in need. These include Swipe It Forward, RISD Flips, and Second Life [see Glossary]. A plan to keep students better informed about these programs will be developed as part of the individual area SEI Action Plans described in I.1.1.1.

#### **2. Estimation of Course Costs**

Careful financial planning is of the utmost importance for students managing constrained budgets, and RISD must provide accurate and timely information about supplemental expenses to help our students plan ahead effectively. Beginning in the Fall 2017 semester, all new courses submitted for approval must provide an itemized estimate of costs for required and recommended materials, books, field trips, and fees on the Student Planning platform. Department Heads and Deans will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this new system. By the following fall semester, all courses must list total cost estimates in published course descriptions in the 2019–20 catalogue.

### **IV. Academics**

As an academic institution, we are dedicated to shaping new bodies of knowledge and creative expression to reflect the many different dimensions of contemporary human experience, locally as well as globally. This intellectual foundation also demands that we, as a critical learning community, continue to examine the traditional formulations of excellence and innovation in our academics, especially when our understanding of historical systems of bias and marginalization compels us to look in the direction of more inclusive models of teaching, learning, and inquiry.

As we work to raise diversity in the demographic profile of our community, we also must ensure that academics at RISD cover a broader range of the art and design practices, traditions, and cultures that are now connecting with each other around the world. In this global context, we have to intensify our examination of the roles of race, gender, socioeconomic position, and other iterations of social difference in the development of cultural forms and creative practices.

Extending our academic scope is a commitment we must undertake together, as a community. Department heads and deans, for example, can collaborate with their respective faculties to review syllabi, encourage the creation of new courses and curricula, and utilize the teaching and course development resources available through the Associate Provost/Dean of Faculty and the Dean of Libraries.

While RISD remains firmly committed to the academic freedom of faculty to design their own syllabi, curricula, and individual teaching methodologies, we share a responsibility to connect our pedagogies with the evolving culture on campus, which prizes inclusivity and social engagement as driving forces in contemporary creative work. In the spirit of generosity that is a hallmark of effective educators, we have to keep our academics meaningful and relevant to guide the deeply felt aspirations of our students.

Known for creative speculation and innovation, RISD faculty will be able to seize on this opportunity to chart new learning pathways. As our new M.A. programs in Global Arts and Cultures and Nature–Culture–Sustainability Studies demonstrate, our faculty are, indeed, already leading us in this direction.

As part of our next Institutional Strategic Plan, faculty and academic leadership will be asked to assess our current requirements and credit distributions to determine if they need to be updated to stay abreast of contemporary practices and pedagogies. Our goal remains to provide carefully designed degree structures that are both rigorous and culturally relevant.

In addition, the Institutional Strategic Plan will undertake a comprehensive review of ongoing efforts to improve advising at RISD. Improvements under consideration include the development of a “multimodal” advising network, as well as a “tagging” system for courses that currently is being tested. This system will enable students to better link and concentrate their course selections around specific interests and themes.

## **1. Faculty Development**

The Office of the Provost and the Associate Provost/Dean of Faculty, in conjunction with the Office of SEI, will be responsible for implementing development opportunities for faculty that emphasize mentorship and advising for intercultural competency, and the roles of diversity, inclusion, and social equity in creative

learning. More offerings will be embedded in existing events and programs, such as New Faculty Orientation, Faculty Search Kickoffs, and Development Day. In addition, deans and department heads will nominate members of the faculty to participate in intensive workshops on peer coaching, to be developed through the Office of SEI and Academic Affairs.

The SEI Action Plan will include an annual budget for at least the next three years to fund pertinent faculty development opportunities.

## **2. New Courses Relevant to Social Equity and Inclusion**

Academic Affairs will be charged with overseeing implementation of new course offerings that explore the intersections of art and design practice, creative pedagogy, and social expression around issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity. Faculty may also choose to adjust current offerings to focus more on diverse perspectives in syllabi, in course materials and examples, and through guest lecturers and visiting critics.

## **3. Faculty Webpages**

One of the foremost reasons for why students of art and design want to attend RISD is to learn from and work closely with our distinguished faculty of working artists, designers, and scholars. On its own, the professional work created independently by the members of the faculty certainly does not require any accompanying commentary or history to function effectively out in the world. But to the extent that applicants to RISD are considering a far-reaching commitment if accepted into the college, we should provide, in turn, an informative contextualization of each faculty member's professional practice on the [risd.edu](http://risd.edu) site. By noting key areas of interest and expertise in each faculty member's work, this contextualization will enable both applicants and current students to make more informed decisions about seeking out the teachers and courses of study that expand their individual lines of inquiry.

Accordingly, we will ask all full-time faculty members to update their individual webpages on the [risd.edu](http://risd.edu) site every year in order to furnish viewers with the most current and informative content. Department heads and deans will be required to review individual faculty pages for consistency and accuracy. The Associate Provost/Dean of Faculty will develop guidelines and forms for the updated faculty pages in conjunction with the Office of SEI and RISD Media as part of a multi-year process, providing an anticipated time table for completion.

## **V. Institutional Operations**

A culture of inclusion prioritizes common spaces, shared experiences, reciprocity, and growth and development models across conventional hierarchies and other rigid categorizations. To promote such a culture, our central institutional operations will have to build more agency into the RISD student experience, and foster a community ethos that crosses over the lines of individual divisions and departments.

## **1. Universal Scheduling Grid**

RISD students are currently using multiple scheduling systems across the college as built up by individual divisions and departments. The resulting patchwork makes it difficult for students to coordinate their required classes and electives, especially across departments and/or divisions, and to engage in co-curricular activities. To resolve this blockage, the Registrar will work to reinstate a universal scheduling grid. As a planning tool, the universal grid will provide students with greater agency, not only in selecting classes more effectively, but also in managing their overall schedules to open up more time for communal life and engagement.

The new system will be implemented in 2017–18 and all divisions and departments will be required to convert to the universal grid according to a practically feasible sequence determined by the Office of the Registrar in consultation with the Provost.

## **2. Institutional Programming**

Building on current momentum, our institution-wide lectures, dialogues, and public events will continue to feature presentations that emphasize equity, inclusion, and diversity as integral values for a culture of dynamic learning and making. Specific programming open to all students, faculty, and staff, will be augmented by training and development programming to stimulate new conversations and develop greater expertise across the institution on topics such as unconscious bias, intercultural awareness, and social difference.

## **3. Updated Marketing Content**

As we continue to diversify our community and insist on social equity as a core value, it is essential for us to clearly convey this commitment in all marketing communications aimed at audiences beyond our campus. These audiences include prospective students and their families, prospective employees, RISD alumni, the donor community, partner organizations, peer academic institutions, and key cultural influencers. Importantly, our marketing content must go beyond declarations of intent and demonstrate the tangible results of our current SEI efforts, underscoring our position as a pedagogically and socially innovative institution that prizes difference, inclusivity, and equity.

## **4. Inclusivity Guides for Faculty and Staff**

Faculty in the Social Equity Action Working Group have designed an excellent Inclusive Teaching Guide. We will support further development of this guide and work on a distribution plan. In addition, we will create two new inclusivity guides: for student critique and staff interactions.

Critique, in its many forms, has an indispensable role in RISD’s culture of experimentation and innovation. As the arena for testing creative and intellectual rigor, it is directed most effectively by our experienced faculty at the local level. Nevertheless, we also need general institutional guidelines for achieving a balance between the critical examination of student work and fundamental respect for different social identities and positions—including the specific histories and experiences they reflect.

Academic Affairs will develop the Inclusive Critique Guide in conjunction with the faculty and the Senior Social Equity Fellow, while Human Resources will be responsible for formulating a Staff Inclusivity Guide. Both new guides are slated for completion by the 2019–20 academic year. We also will make funding available to faculty to further develop the Inclusive Teaching Guide, and to faculty and staff members who wish to incorporate the new inclusivity guides in tools that can be shared with other educators and administrators.

### **5. RISDiversity Program**

As a celebration of diverse identities throughout the college and museum, our RISDiversity programming has proven especially effective in both community-building and fundraising. Our landmark 2016 publication, *RISDiversity Community Narratives*, and the accompanying series of web stories have given voice to many individuals in our community to express who they are. This initiative has inspired other institutions, and has won awards. We will expand this program to include a live storytelling performance event and a second publication, which is currently in development.

## **VI. Community Engagement**

Active engagement with our surrounding communities is central to RISD’s mission to educate the public about art and design and contribute to a diverse, globally aware society. We recognize this engagement as a potent and culturally relevant form of research and practice, one that is directly connected to our educational model of project-based learning, especially for the growing number of faculty and students whose own work incorporates social and pedagogical practices.

The Providence art and design community is known nationally for its excellence and diversity, and RISD, through both the college and museum, has played an important leadership role in its evolution. Today we are looking to expand our role further by supporting a broader ecology of community arts and design programs in underserved areas through collaborations with a number of local schools and service organizations.

RISD has a long history of advocacy and support for K–12 art education, locally, nationally, and increasingly around the world. Currently, we are offering a range of high-quality K–12 courses and programs through the Department of Teaching + Learning in Art + Design, Project Open Door, Museum Education, Continuing Education (CE) for Young Artists, and Pre-College.

The following actions are intended to refocus and coordinate our community-based programs and partnerships in line with the institutional effort centered on equity, inclusion, and diversity:

### **1. Holistic Community Engagement Strategy**

The Director of Community Relations and the Institutional Strategic Planning Core Committee will be charged with working across the institution to craft a comprehensive strategy for community engagement in conjunction with ongoing equity, inclusion, and diversity initiatives at RISD. By coordinating our work in K–12 education and other forms of community-based research, learning, and service, this strategy will cultivate a highly motivated, institutionally supported community of creative educators who are focused on engaged scholarship and practice. At the same time, it will enable our students to directly correlate their interests in community-based work with their educational goals.

This collaborative effort will involve the Associate Provost/Dean of Faculty, the Associate Provost of Research | Global | Practice, the Center for Student Involvement, Continuing Education, the Department of Teaching + Learning in Art + Design, Project Open Door, Museum Education, Partnered Projects, and students, faculty, staff who wish to take part in and make meaningful contributions to the life of our local community. Additionally, the Director of Global Partners and Programs will coordinate the RISD engagement work that is being carried out on a global scale, with the aim of sharing best practices and correlating RISD's impacts on communities near and far.

### **2. Community Engagement Survey**

The Director of Community Relations, in conjunction with the Vice President of Integrated Planning, will be charged with creating a survey that captures the full range of RISD's overall engagement with local communities in order to better ground our strategy and resource allocation. This snapshot will establish a baseline according to which we can build a strategic framework for our engagement activities, partnerships, and goals, and then set targets for future development. It will allow RISD to develop the resources to cultivate more durable, significant community relationships, and to identify areas where interest and expertise position us to do work with greater impact and visibility.



## VII. Community Wellness

As the SEI Working Group and the President's Office reviewed existing surveys, student input, departmental responses, and community feedback, we identified a pattern of concern that pointed to an insufficient focus on personal health and wellness at RISD. Many respondents noted that a culture of equity and inclusion would attend to the development and growth of students in a well-rounded or holistic sense, rather than strictly in terms of individual artistic and academic progress. The actions below will address the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of community wellness:

### 1. Committee on Student Wellness / Counseling

RISD will assemble a new Committee on Student Wellness in 2017–18 to review current practices and evaluate wellness histories for both the community as a whole and for its different demographic segments. Supported by the expertise and counsel of outside consultants, the committee will include representatives from Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Health Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, Human Resources, and the Office of SEI. Additional counseling staff are planned for 2017 as well as additional new counseling interns.

### 2. Brown University Affinity Groups

RISD has a long-term, mutually supportive collaborative relationship with Brown University. Many of Brown's support centers have welcomed RISD students, albeit without any formal agreements between our two institutions. Notable Brown facilities that have accommodated our students include the Office of the Chaplains and Religious Life, the Swearer Center for Public Service, the Center for Students of Color, the First-Generation College and Low-Income Student Center (FLi Center), the LGBTQ Center, and the Sarah Doyle Women's Center.

The RISD community deeply appreciates this tradition of generosity and neighborliness, but we also cannot take for granted the contributions of our Brown colleagues. We have to duly acknowledge their exemplary support and, at the same time, recognize that RISD must take more responsibility for meeting the needs of our students. As we work to develop more proactive collaborations with our counterparts at Brown, one notable area of mutual interest will be supporting the religious and spiritual lives of students, faculty, and staff in our shared communities.

### 3. Prayer Spaces on Campus

In addition to maintaining the Reflection Room and the Peace Center, we will look to designate other spaces on campus for prayer and meditation. Future renovations of living and work areas in the Quad will include space for religious and spiritual practice.

## **FUTURE OUTLOOK**

For RISD to maintain its role as an internationally recognized leader in art and design education, the institution's structures, processes, and pedagogies will have to reflect a dynamic learning culture of inclusion and equity. As much as those principles are profoundly important for our own community, they resonate equally throughout the professional art and design fields, as well as with the increasingly diverse, socially engaged audiences with whom creative practitioners communicate. It is sufficiently clear that in today's rapidly evolving, interconnected landscape, skills such as intercultural literacy and global awareness are integral proficiencies for advanced artists and designers. But in a much broader sense, the disciplines of art and design also provide the means for our graduates to give voice and shape to the principles of openness, tolerance, equity as part of new ways of making community and culture in the world.

In the context of persistent economic inequality, tendentious social institutions, deepening social fragmentation, and rising levels of virulent bigotry around the globe, the RISD community today is standing up for diversity, nondiscrimination, respect, and fundamental equity as a moral obligation, first and foremost. As core principles, they inform the work we do in the classroom, in the studio, and in our communal life. They are central to the quality, cultural relevance, and social impact of the learning and creative production we champion at RISD.

Now is the time to take our commitment to inclusion and equity to the next level. Future generations of RISD graduates will attest to its effects as they proceed to create the forms and expressions of a more humane and just society, marked by the spirit of generosity and consideration for all of our partners in the human experience.



## GLOSSARY

### Diversity Champions

A Human Resources initiative, Diversity Champions are advisors trained by Human Resources to help search committees implement strategies for recruiting diverse pools of candidates.

### AICAD Postgraduate Teaching Fellows Program

A program designed to offer eligible recent graduates of AICAD schools (Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design) a one-year teaching position at participating institutions in order to provide significant professional practice opportunities to high-achieving graduates and to contribute to the goal of increasing the diversity of our faculty.

<http://aicad.org/aicad-post-graduate-teaching-fellowship-20162017-faq/>

### Office of Intercultural Student Engagement (ISE)

A RISD office that promotes cultural awareness, dialogue, and interaction while serving as a hands-on resource for specific RISD communities. Primary communities include: students of color; international students; students identifying within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Polyamorous. (LGBTQIAP) spectrum; religious and/or spiritual students; and those dedicated to inclusive community. The office provides leadership in the areas of student success, retention programs, campus education, working closely together with faculty and staff. It serves as a resource to advise students on social, cultural, and personal matters, and to assist with connections to various departments. ISE develops student leaders, and supports and advises student cultural groups.

<https://www.ise.risd.edu/>

### Project Thrive

Housed in ISE, this program connects first-year first generation students with faculty, staff, and alumni to encourage formation of meaningful mentorship that will positively impact the academic transition and cultural success of students at RISD.

The goals of the program can be viewed at:

<https://www.ise.risd.edu/project-thrive>

### Project Open Door [POD]

A partnership between RISD and several Providence-area high schools that includes after-school art programs, portfolio-preparation programs for promising art students, and a studio program called Design Connections. The program's goals can be viewed at:

<http://risdprojectopendoor.com/>

### Swipe-It-Forward

A temporary assistance program facilitated by Dining Services that allows campus partners (Office of the Dean of Students, Center for Student Involvement, Residential Life, Counseling & Psychological Services, Health Services, Public Safety, Dual Degree Coordinator and Student Financial Services) to provide short term meal assistance to students in need. Campus partners are able to access meals that have been donated by RISD students on a meal plan. Each student can donate one guest meal per semester. To donate, a student requests a Donation Form from a cashier, fills out the form and returns it to the cashier.

### RISD Flips Yard Sale

RISD Flips is an annual yard sale held at Market Square. The goals of the program are:

- To generate funds for scholarships in support of the Staff Council student scholarship.
- To support international students by providing available supplies that might be otherwise difficult to travel with.
- To support Second Life by coordinating the transport of art supplies to the Second Life store.
- To donate unsold articles to community organizations.
- To reduce environmental impact by reducing the amount of waste generated on campus at the end of the academic year.

### Second Life

RISD Second Life is a nonprofit, student-run, upcycling program that collects usable art supplies and raw materials and redistributes them back to RISD students and to the local community.

### Diversity Fellows

A program that brings in annual artists-in-residence whose work focuses on diversity and inclusion.

<http://academicaffairs.risd.edu/2016/09/diversity-fellows-announcement-2016-2017/>

**RISDiversity Community Narratives**

A public art book, and community narratives project created to raise awareness around the beautiful, rich diversity that exists within the RISD community. Its book sales generate additional funds for campus social equity initiatives.

<http://diversity.risd.edu/>

**CSI**

The Center for Student Involvement builds upon students' educational experience by promoting a supportive environment for cultural, social and intellectual development. The office serves as a liaison between the college faculty and staff with student government groups, and oversees student organizations, athletics and activities.

<http://csi.risd.edu/>

**POLICIES APPENDIX**

(To access these policies go to [sei.risd.edu](http://sei.risd.edu/).)

**Nondiscrimination notice** (including list of contacts who can handle Title IX issues, ADA issues, and "other/general inquiries regarding bias/discrimination")

**Discriminatory Harassment policy and procedures** (including a nonretaliation provision)

**Title IX policy and procedures** (including a nonretaliation provision)

**ADA policy and accommodation procedures** (staff)

**ADA Grievance Procedure** (geared toward students, but available to all)

**Respect in the Workplace policy**

**Employee Standards of Conduct** (including a nonretaliation provision and this general statement: "RISD is committed to operating lawfully, ethically, and professionally in everything it does. Accordingly, we expect employees to comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and RISD policies; to act ethically, honestly, and with integrity; to treat each other, other members of the RISD community, and members of the public with courtesy, civility, and respect; and to conduct themselves in a manner befitting the good name and reputation of RISD.")

**Code of Student Conduct** (including anti-harassment provisions and this general aspirational statement: "The Code is neither a criminal nor a civil code and does not operate like one. Our expectations for our fellow community members are for a significantly higher standard of conduct than the bare minimum prescribed by law; conduct that is legal may nevertheless still be unacceptable within the bounds of our community.")

**Code of Faculty Ethics**

**Whistleblower tool, policy, and procedures**

**“The challenge is how we pay attention to both the individual and the collective, the past, present and future; and how we try to make things better - for the individual and for the whole.”**

— Pradeep Sharma / Provost



