February 19, 2021

Dear Students, Alumni and Faculty:

In the summer of 2020, I affirmed the Sustainability Management program's commitment to anti-racism and announced a long-term effort to improve diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) in the program. I would like to update you on our progress and the work ahead.

Students, alumni, faculty, and staff have come together to create the Sustainability Management DE&I Committee, whose charge is to oversee the program's anti-racism work, provide accountability for the implementation of recommendations that emerge from committee discussions, and to communicate periodically with students, alumni, and faculty on the program’s progress. The Committee's goals are to 1) diversify the student body, faculty, and staff; 2) create an inclusive environment in the program; and 3) integrate equity in concerns into the curriculum. I am grateful to the committee for its work and commitment, and to George Sarrinikolaou for his leadership of this work.

Early in this effort, we deemed it important to conduct a DE&I audit that would set a baseline of performance, as well produce new strategies for improvement. The audit, which is now underway, is being conducted by Iere Strategies, a consulting team of social scientists with long experience in DE&I work. The audit involves surveying students, faculty, and staff, in-depth interviews on a voluntary basis, an examination of program data, and an analysis of the program's two required courses (Sustainability Management and the Capstone Workshop), including a review of the syllabi and observations of class sessions.

In the coming days, each of you will receive a survey, designed by our consultants with input from the Committee, that is intended to collect information about the views and experience of students, faculty, staff, and alumni as they relate to DE&I in the program and at Columbia University more broadly. Individual survey responses will be anonymous in order to encourage all recipients to provide the meaningful feedback we need in order to make progress. I urge all of you to help us by responding to the survey.
Outside of the audit, the alumni representatives on the SUMA DE&I Committee -- Shruti Deshpande and Rose Nnenne -- are planning outreach to alumni, with the goal of giving alumni an opportunity to discuss their experiences in the program and the significance of diversity, equity and inclusion in their professional lives.

While creating the Committee and planning the DE&I audit, the program has also taken many other actions to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion over the past six months. I would like to highlight some of them below.

**Diversity**

1. Participation in the School of Professional Studies’ [HBCU Fellowship Program](#).
2. Greater outreach to prospective students in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Minority Serving Institutions, including online information sessions.
3. Online advertising intended to reach working professionals, who are graduates of HBCU’s.

**Integration of Equity in Curriculum**

1. Collaboration with faculty to integrate or accentuate equity concerns in applicable courses.
3. Integration of equity in the required Sustainability Management course.
4. Capstone Workshop projects with equity and sustainability as central concerns.
5. Co-curricular programming, including a Sustainability Skills Seminar on Leadership and Environmental Justice led by staff of WEACT, an environmental justice nonprofit organization.
While we have much more work to do in the months and years ahead, I am encouraged by our promising start. I look forward to working with the entire SUMA community in accomplishing our goals.

Best Regards,

Steven Cohen

Dr. Steven Cohen
Senior Vice Dean, School of Professional Studies, Columbia University
Professor in the Practice of Public Affairs
Director, Master of Public Administration Program in Environmental Science and Policy & Executive MPA Concentration in Environmental Policy and Sustainability Management, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/mpaenvironment/
Director, Master of Science in Sustainability Management, School of Professional Studies, Columbia University http://sustainability.ei.columbia.edu/
Director, Research Program on Sustainability Policy & Management, The Earth Institute http://spm.ei.columbia.edu/
Tel: 212-854-4445 | Cell: 917-881-7344| Personal Web Site: http://www.columbia.edu/~sc32/