

The Spitzer School of Architecture Racial Equity Statement May 2022

This is a living document. It will change and evolve as the work and actions grow and develop.

Memory

In creating a Racial Equity Statement of Purpose (RESoP) we start by naming what we recognize both in our world and within our organization as having contributed to injustice and inequity.

As our nation continues to grapple with racism, sexism, and inequity, the Spitzer School of Architecture acknowledges its contribution to these conditions.

- We acknowledge that the Spitzer School of Architecture, grounded on the schist bedrock outcrop of Harlem, is situated upon the ancestral homeland and territory of the Munsee Lenape, Wappinger, and Wiechquaesgeck peoples.
- We recognize that perception -- both our own and the public's -- of the Spitzer School of Architecture, within the context of the City College of New York, comes from an inherited narrative of deficit in comparison to elitist institutions.
- We bear witness to the legacy of a static model of the architect's practice trajectory, which produces resistance to change in curriculum and school culture.
- We acknowledge that the professional and pedagogical norms of long hours and expensive productions in the professional disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design have taken a human toll on many members of our community, comprising:
 - Accrual of disproportionate advantages and rewards to those who come to our school with more personal and cultural resources and support. These advantages are normalized.
 - An attendant lack of curiosity about cultural differences and new and unique perspectives, and a lack of acknowledgment of the lived, everyday realities of many members of our community.
 - The glorification of overwork and compliance.
- We believe that all suffer, though some much more than others, from the consequences of patriarchal and misogynistic dynamics that manifest in strict hierarchies and microaggressive behaviors across identities.

Obligations

The Spitzer School recognizes the obligation to repair harm, to disrupt inheritance, and to challenge the studio culture that operates from an inherited tradition of dominance and narrows the space for diversity and expressions of lived experience.

We believe that:

- As a public institution of higher learning, we are obliged and committed to the ongoing acknowledgment of the values of all people and their contributions toward the creation and stewardship of the built environment. This acknowledgment willingly commits us to

the ongoing examination of the historical injustices of design, related to systemic racism, classism, and sexism, as a necessary form of knowledge. And we remain invested in the pursuit and dissemination of this and other forms of knowledge in an effort to create a just and inclusive society.

- It is our obligation to address the human role in creating, correcting, and sustaining the built environment through the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and sustainability. We will do this by embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion, conditions we believe are absolutely necessary in the creative process. By doing this, we enable better outcomes in our cities and our world.
- We are obliged to interrogate and change the historical canon of design pedagogy to become more inclusive, more diverse, and thereby more informative and more powerful. Through public exchanges, work in the classroom, and work in our communities we commit to demonstrate our collective values and foster ongoing dialogue and meaningful experiences.
- By committing to these obligations, we will bring greater representation of BIPOC communities to the roles of global leadership and expertise in the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, policy, and sustainability.
- In the pursuit of the Spitzer mission, below, we look to the diverse voices of the past, present, and the future. They have guided us and will continue to guide us in constantly reevaluating the obligations laid out here and charting an enlightened path forward.

The Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture is deeply committed to creating a just, sustainable, and imaginative future for a rapidly urbanizing planet. Through innovative research and interdisciplinary collaboration, the degree programs in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, and Sustainability in the Urban Environment seek to educate a diverse student body to become engaged professionals, both reflecting and enriching the complex communities of local and global environments. The School acts in the spirit of the City College of New York's historic Ephebic Oath: "To transmit the city, not only not less, but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."

Actions

The Spitzer School is committed to embracing our standing as a public school of architecture with a broad intersectional community that embodies many voices and perspectives. These many experiences and perspectives collected in our community are a strength.

Moving forward, we commit to:

- Develop, maintain, and execute Racial Equity Action Plan.
- Maintain a JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) committee to support the ongoing racial equity action items, including keeping this Racial Equity Statement of Purpose current and relevant.

- Direct resources and energy toward attracting and retaining an engaged and increasingly diverse faculty and staff of color, reflecting the identities and experiences of our highly heterogeneous student body.
- Implement specific processes to examine and revise our program curricula to transform away from the harms related to the centering of a single implied white, cisgendered, male, able-bodied, privileged subject of architecture.
- Advance models of instruction and design pedagogy that are centered in students' lived experiences; that are diverse, multi-lingual, and multicultural; that accommodate diversity of thought; that make space for open-ended conversation; and that de-center the western tradition and celebrate historically marginalized discourses.
- Implement a more active and safer forum for student response to and assessment of program curricula and pedagogy.
- Implement a more active and safer forum for faculty to discuss and assess issues of racial equity and diversity in relationship to program curricula and pedagogy.
- Implement mid-semester check-ins / assessment sessions with students to field concerns and comments on course curricula and format.
- Advance new models of mentorship to foster success in school and in practice.

Future

The Spitzer School envisions a world in which:

- We pioneer new models of instruction in design that are student-centered; drawn from student experiences; that honor diverse, multi-lingual, multicultural perspectives; and that decenter western tradition and pedagogy.
- We advance new models of mentoring and design thinking from the academy to the profession.
- Our students, alumni, faculty, and staff experience transformative success and fulfillment in the classroom and/or in practice.
- We embody the idea that architecture is a central and essential component of a more just, peaceable, and humane world.