

Committee on Inclusiveness in the Profession

2017–2018 Membership

Kenneth Taylor, chair (2019)

Wiebke Deimling, disability representative (2020)

Sally Haslanger (2018)

Michelle Mason (2019)

Noell Birondo (2020)

Asta K. Sveinsdottir, *ex officio* (2018)

Julie Maybee, *ex officio* (2019)

Charlotte Witt, *ex officio* (2019)

Brian J. Bruya, *ex officio* (2020)

Robert K. Garcia, *ex officio* (2020)

Lori J. Underwood, *ex officio* (2020)

Adam S. Cureton, *ex officio* (Society for Philosophy and Disability)

Sahar Joakim, GSC Liaison (2018)

Report of the Committee on Diversity and Inclusiveness

Since this is my final report as Committee Chair, I focus less on our recurring annual activities, and more on a series of lessons learned and proposals for the future. My goal is to prompt discussion among the board about the best way for this committee to add value to the activities of APA.

After three years as chair and one year as vice chair, it is not entirely clear to me what exactly the distinctive charter of the Inclusive Committee either is or should be. Nor is it clear to me how much if any additional scope might be available to the Committee and through it and various other committees to the APA. But if the Committee and the APA is to function as an effective and impactful change agent, both within the Association and the profession more broadly, it seems to me that it needs to undertake a broader and more ambitious range of actions. It can only do that, I believe with the backing and efforts of the leadership, including the leadership of the several divisions and the national board of officers.

Clearly, both the leadership of the APA and much, though perhaps not all, of the membership of the APA, is deeply committed to diversity and inclusiveness. That commitment is currently manifest in a number of different ways. We have a several committees specifically devoted to increasing and sustaining this or that aspect of diversity. These committees regularly publish newsletters and sponsor committee sessions at APA divisional meetings. Thanks, in large measure to the cooperation and flexibility of the Pacific Division, for the past several years, this past year included, the various diversity committees have cooperated to mount an ambitious, multi-session diversity mini-conference at a succession of Pacific Division meetings. This is a great though nascent tradition. It will not happen this year. But I am optimistic that it will be picked up again in the very near future. The Inclusiveness Committee also maintains an ever growing database of diverse syllabi on a wide range of topics. Though we have no systematic data on how widely or frequently this database is accessed and utilized, it seems a priori likely that such a database may have considerable potential as a curricular resource for faculty committed to making curricular changes in their own teaching and mentorship. In addition, the Inclusiveness Committee regularly evaluates applications for Diversity and Inclusiveness grants, with the board. Moreover, many of the small grant applications ... in the evaluation of which the Inclusiveness Committee also participates ... address issues of diversity. Finally, the from time to time the Inclusiveness Committee takes on such matters as it may either be directed to by the Board, the Executive Director, or of its own initiative.

While all of these activities serve the cause of promoting and encouraging diversity, it is not clear to me how far reaching their impacts are. Nor is it clear that they represent adequate responses to the challenges we face when it comes to increasing and sustaining diversity. It is with that thought in mind that I invite the leadership to contemplate several proposals for expanding the scope of the Committee's efforts. I am aware that the APA on its own has little direct influence over grass roots decision making and hiring practices within the various

departments that employ philosophers. As a consequence, there is not much that either the Association as a whole, let alone one of its standing committees with relatively meager resources, can hope to achieve unilaterally. Nonetheless, I believe that with the backing of the board and the several divisions, the APA can play a significantly greater role than it has heretofore played in helping to shape a national conversation among philosophers.

I propose that the Board authorize the Inclusiveness Committee, together with the various diversity committees, and in cooperation with the leadership of the several divisions, to mount a series of diversity summits, perhaps over the course of several years. These summits should involve as many different stakeholders as possible, both faculty and graduate students, from a wide variety of departments. The goal would be to forge a wide-ranging consensus among these stakeholders as to how best to increase diversity at all levels of philosophy. Though the Inclusive Committee has taken up this possibility on a number of different occasions and has generally responded favorably to the concept, it is clear to me that planning and organizing such a series of summits is beyond the capacity of the diversity committee alone. That is why I seek to make this an initiative of the board as a whole. I envision a steering committee, whose membership is partly drawn from the several diversity committees but is also partly drawn from the broader leadership of both the Association and the several divisions. In addition, it is important that any such endeavor involve philosophers from a wide variety of institutions and with a wide variety of perspectives from the very start. If we are to have any significant leverage on local decision making and priorities, this endeavor must remain in touch with grass root perspectives, as embodied in the diverse array of settings in which philosophy is practiced.

On a related note, I stress that while I personally believe, but do not know, that there is a widespread commitment to diversity among our membership at large, I also believe that the APA needs to do much more to gauge the actual extent of that commitment among our membership. It also needs to ensure, through more effective communication, that its commitment to diversity is not wrongly seen as being in service of a relatively narrow political agenda. Though I myself would reject that charge, anecdotal evidence suggests that at least some of our membership and potential membership may not see things in the same way. To that end, we must do a much more systematic job of gauging where the membership and the profession actually are. We must ensure all reasonable points of view both are, and feel like they are, being given a fair hearing. To that end we need to facilitate sometimes challenging conversations about these matters. This is one goal of the proposed diversity summits.

We should not be content to rely on either anecdotal evidence or Bayesian priors in gauging the attitudes of colleagues. We need to take the temperature of both our membership and the profession at large, on these and other matters, in a much more rigorous and systematic way, and we need to do so on some recurring basis. To that end, I strongly urge the Board to commit the Association to much more systematic data collection on all manner of issues, including data about attitudes of our membership toward matters touching on our attempts to diversify the profession. No doubt, doing so would require significant additional resources. I urge the board to commit to finding those resources as an urgent priority.