

Second Student Meeting with Dean Janow: Action Items (June 30)

Dear Dean Janow,

Thank you for meeting with us on June 30th and for sending a document of updates post our first meeting on June 11. Below you will find our comments, concerns, and questions regarding the information we have received from your office in our recent communications.. This document is organized in five sections aligned with our actionable demands. As always, our correspondences are public-documents that can be shared with faculty, staff, and students in the spirit of democratizing decision-making and prioritizing transparency.

DEI & Racial Training Demands:

1. Conduct an annual full DE&I audit of SIPA
 - a. We expect a third-party to conduct a study of the school and student demographics.
 - i. The contents should include an analysis of the presence or absence of equity considerations in admissions, financial aid, faculty hiring, and marketing materials.
2. Hire a Director of Inclusion and Equity
 - a. This Director should be a Black, Latinx, or Indigenous person
 - b. This Director should be devoted full-time to the listed demands and diversity initiatives as well as chair the Diversity Committee
3. Include the Diversity Committee for transparency and accountability
 - a. The agenda-driven committee should have a clear mission for institutional change and should be included at every step of these demands
4. Institute a more robust anti-racist, diversity, and inclusion training
 - a. This training would be mandatory for all students, faculty, and staff

Comments:

With regards to **DE&I audit and report (1)**, Dean Janow noted that there is no existing self-assessment. However, Dean Janow and Senior Associate Dean will inaugurate this summer a self-assessment of diversity and inclusion at SIPA “with input from numerous parts of the School that will serve as the basis for a report that will be made public before the end of the academic year.” In addition, Dean Janow mentioned that she will investigate third party diversity & inclusion experts who could help design and provide an impartial review of the assessment.

- Please share with us a more actionable and operational timeline around this self-assessment. Important questions include:
 - What are the working deadlines?
 - Who else is leading it?

- Which faculty members will be involved?
 - How will current students and alumni be engaged?
 - What actions are being taken to make sure that all stakeholders involved represent the true diversity that SIPA seeks to achieve?
- How often will the leadership tasked with this self-assessment meet? Please make minutes from this meeting publicly available to the Diversity Committee.

In terms of **instituting anti-racist trainings (4)**, Dean Janow noted that “in addition to the faculty workshops already regularly undertaken at SIPA on inclusive teaching and the classroom, the Senior Associate Dean along with OAA and OSA will investigate further training on diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism with the goal of introducing such programs during the academic year.” We look forward to hearing further updates on this end, specifically whether these additional training will be mandatory for all faculty members.

We have not heard any substantial updates regarding hiring **DE&I Director (2) and involving the SIPA Diversity Committee (3)**. Dean Janow noted that the self-assessment will determine whether SIPA will consider hiring a Diversity Officer and what their responsibilities may be. We believe that a commitment to hiring a full-time Director of Inclusion and Equity will ensure that SIPA can have continual monitoring of future issues to come up. We also believe the Diversity Committee should be part of the discussion and decision-making.

Classes and Curriculum Demands:

1. State a concrete plan for adding racial-justice focused classes to SIPA curricula
 - a. By the end of Fall 2020, we expect that the administration will add at least two additional classes for the 2021-2022 academic year that are explicitly centered on racial justice, specifically in the realms of policy or advocacy.
 - b. These courses should be taught by a person(s) of color
 - c. These courses should be eligible for credit toward degree programs
 - d. SIPA should follow the efforts of other policy and Columbia schools who are successfully leading on offering a variety of racial-justice centered courses. Link: [Spreadsheet of Courses](#)
2. Discuss how these classes can be incorporated into the mandatory curriculum
 - a. It is certainly important to increase electives on racial justice. However, we also want to discuss how the core courses of the degree programs can include anti-racist policy components. Addressing race and class in the context of public policy must be a part of the core SIPA education.
3. Facilitate the creation of one or more capstones (for core credit) on Diversity and Inclusion
 - a. This capstone would serve as credit-bearing initiative for students to examine these demands and future steps
4. Create an Anonymous Feedback Form for every class
 - a. Students can use the form in each class to relay concerns particularly any concerns with inclusion and race. The professor should be required to continuously check this form for responses throughout the semester and adapt.
5. Allow racial-justice focused courses taken at other Columbia schools to be counted for the credit requirement of concentrations and/or specializations
 - a. Cross-registering for courses at other schools is very difficult. However, even when granted a seat, these courses often do not count for SIPA degree requirements.

Comments:

In response to **a concrete plan for adding racial-justice focused classes to SIPA curricula (1)**, Dean Janow notes that she and Vice Dean Scott Barrett will co-chair a faculty consultative committee to engage with faculty on how to create initiatives that will address racism & anti-racism. Dean Janow mentions that the initial members of the committee include Professors Michael Nutter, Ester Fuchs, Yasmine Ergas, Sarah Holloway, and Steve Cohen. Dean Janow also writes that she has “...invited SIPA full-time faculty to recommend instructors for additional courses by part-time faculty from under-represented minorities especially focused on race and social justice. Faculty will be encouraged to make suggestions this summer, which will be reviewed by the faculty Committee on Instruction with the goal of adding additional courses by spring 2021 for that semester and beyond.”

- We are concerned about the lack of diversity in this preliminary faculty consultative committee. Although we understand that all faculty have the opportunity to participate in

discussions, we emphasize the need to integrate diversity in the process and not only in the end goal.

- We also recommend reaching out to the African American and African Diaspora Studies Departments of Columbia for suggestions on race based classes as well as recommendations for Black, Indigenous, Person of Color professors to join SIPA faculty.

In response to **the creation of one or more capstones on Diversity and Inclusion (3)**, Dean Janow mentions that “The Office of Academic Affairs has already begun consulting with Professor Nutter and Professor Fuchs about adding one or more capstones focused on racism and inclusion. As always, capstones are offered for credit.”

- We want to stress that other concentrations should also be involved in the creation of anti-racist capstones. Anti-racist work cuts through all areas of the world and through practically every policy issue that each of the concentrations offered at SIPA address.

In response to **allowing racial-justice focused courses taken at other Columbia schools to be counted for concentration/specialization credit (5)**, Dean Janow notes that the office will ask this summer “...concentrations and specialization to identify courses on race and policy offered elsewhere in the University” and OSA to survey students which of those courses are of interest to determine if anything can be done to facilitate access to them.

We received no response on the issues of **how these classes and/or anti-racism coursework can be incorporated into the mandatory curriculum (2) and the creation of an Anonymous Feedback Form (4)**. We believe topics on race should be incorporated in our core curriculums, specifically Politics of Policymaking and Conceptual Foundations because these courses discuss policy where race has been integral in history. **Also, the anonymous feedback form should be implemented at the commence of Fall 2020.**

Finally, Dean Janow mentioned SIPA invited faculty to review their own courses and teaching approaches last year.

- What was specifically asked and what were the outcomes? We would like to see the rubric that is used to review each course in departments.

In our call, we presented a **very devastating example** of a class that is predicated on racist ideology, has a professor who has performed racist actions, and exemplifies the non-contractual yet harmful relationship with the NYPD. We initially asked you to conduct research on the contractual and non-contractual relationship SIPA has with the NYPD. In our own research, we found several examples of extremely harmful ties with the NYPD network within our courses.

In the SIPA course search for Fall 2020, we noticed that the course “Modern Urban Terrorism” is being offered and is taught by [Mitchell Silber](#). The description says that the course “will focus on contemporary urban Islamist terrorism, as it is most relevant to New York City and other Western urban centers.” There are various deeply disturbing problems with this course specifically that it

is aligned with the NYPD and it is extremely and violently **Islamophobic, racist, unconstitutional, and imperialist.**

To begin, Silber has a [long history](#) in high positions for the NYPD since 2005. He was the Director of Intelligence Analysis at the NYPD from 2007 to 2012. After his career in the NYPD, he started his own intelligence and security firm called [Guardian Group 745](#), which works to “thwart terrorist plots in NYC”. He co-founded that with Raymond Kelly, the former commissioner of the NYPD who is the man [directly responsible](#) for ramping up former Mayor Giuliani and former Police Commissioner Bratton’s [racist stop-and-frisk policies](#) in NYC that targeted literally [millions](#) of Black and Latinx New Yorkers, who are still facing the [damaging mental health repercussions](#) from their altercations with the police. The other co-founder was David Cohen, who was the first Director of Intelligence Analysis.

Since at least 2002, both Cohen and Kelly were directly responsible, under the Police Department’s Intelligence Division, in engaging in according to the [ACLU](#), “...religious profiling and suspicionless surveillance of Muslims in New York City and beyond.” Moreover, Cohen and Kelly and their department, “...singled out Muslim religious and community leaders, mosques, student associations, organizations, businesses, and individuals for pervasive surveillance that is discriminatory and not conducted against institutions or individuals belonging to any other religious faith, or the public at large.”

When Silber joined the club, he co-authored a report in 2007 called “Radicalization in the West: the Homegrown Threat”, which provided the justification for Kelly and Cohen’s surveillance of Muslim communities, which Silber then actually took over and led. The ACLU notes that the “...report claims to identify a ‘radicalization process’ by which individuals turn into terrorists – a ‘process’ so broad that it seems to treat with suspicion anyone who identifies as Muslim, harbors Islamic beliefs, or engages in Islamic religious practices. For example, its purported radicalization ‘indicators’ include First Amendment-protected activities including ‘wearing traditional Islamic clothing [and] growing a beard,’ abstaining from alcohol, and ‘becoming involved in social activism.’” More information can be found on page 24 of [this ACLU report](#). The [Brennan Center for Justice](#) said that the report and work of the NYPD was very concerning because the report's faulty conclusions, “...will lead to racial and religious profiling, which is harmful to both civil liberties and efforts to ensure national security.” More information from the Brennan Center including severe criticism of the report’s methodology and racist framework can be read about in [this report on page 14](#).

In 2016, in [settlement](#) with the ACLU, the NYPD had to remove Silber’s report because it highlighted and justified unconstitutional and unethical surveillance of Muslim communities in New York City. Yet, this report and Silber’s entrenched beliefs form the basis of his course and syllabus. We even looked at past reviews of Silber’s course and one student said that the course was “...definitely biased towards Islamic extremism--this was mentioned in the syllabus, but it was still slightly disheartening.”

Silber has shown over and over again through his past work, and even his **current work and course** that, to him, Islamophobia, racism, and imperialism are acceptable principles. Mary

McCord, a Georgetown University law professor and a former senior Justice Department official for national security, [said that](#), “In the U.S., more people are killed by far-right extremists than by those who are adherents to Islamist extremism.” At a time when everyone acknowledges that America primarily suffers from a [white nationalist terrorist problem](#), Silber is hell-bent on criminalizing Muslims, who are overwhelmingly Black and Brown.

It's important to note that Silber has been an [Adjunct Professor](#) at SIPA since 2008 and he serves on Dean Janow's Advisory Board. It is concerning that Silber has been at SIPA for 12 years on Dean Janow's board, teaching students, perpetuating racist practices, and potentially even connecting students to his racist network in the NYPD and beyond. Also concerning is that there are other professors who have clear and lasting ties with the NYPD including [Robert Tumin](#) who worked under former Police Commissioner Bratton who launched the racist stop-and-frisk policies.

Hence, another key demand is that Silber be fired, his course cancelled forever, and that SIPA thoroughly investigate all courses and professors at SIPA to determine who has engaged in racist actions, perpetual racism in their courses, and are aligned with the NYPD.

Recruitment of Students and Faculty Demands:

1. Launch a renewed and detailed effort to recruit Black students in the U.S. and abroad
 - a. While SIPA is diverse in terms of nationality, Black students are alarmingly under-represented.
 - b. Recruitment at Historically Black Colleges and Universities is a necessary component of this
2. Launch a specific effort to hire and retain Black and brown Professors
 - a. With a particular attention to those who identify as female

Comments:

In response to **hiring Black & Brown professors (2)**, Dean Janow explains that currently there is a hiring freeze. However in the fall, the SIPA Faculty Executive Committee will “assess priorities for faculty recruitment, with special consideration of scholars from underrepresented minority groups, particularly Black and African-Americans, and scholars whose work focuses on race and social justice”.

However, we have not heard anything substantial on **efforts to recruit Black students from the US and abroad (1)**. It should be noted that SIPA class of 2021 has 10 Black students in its flagship programs of MIA, MPA, MPA-DP which have over 450 students. We are in the process of scheduling a meeting with Grace Han and Emily Toa to discuss this further.

Financial Aid Demands:

1. Greater focus on need-based financial aid to provide financial assistance to Black students and other historically marginalized students
 - a. How can SIPA follow other policy schools like Princeton's Woodrow Wilson and other Columbia schools who offer more robust need-based aid?

Comments:

We have not heard anything substantial on the issue of **Financial Aid**.. Hence, we will be scheduling a meeting with David Sheridan, the Director of Financial Aid, to obtain information on our following points.

- The Financial Aid Office should provide transparency on the financial aid infrastructure
 - What are the current metrics for determining need-based aid?
 - How is race, caste, ethnicity, other indicators of minority status incorporated in this for U.S. and international students?
 - What is the current data behind how many students have need-based financial aid and what is the average amount?
 - What were the results of the [pilot](#) launched in 2018 for the Class of 2020?
- How can SIPA adapt models of other Columbia graduate schools to implement a holistic review for need based aid? Connect with the Business school to see their model. We want to stress the importance of more **focused** funding and not only **more** funding.

Relationship with Harlem Community Demands:

1. Realign our SIPA cafe by:
 - a. Selling products owned by the community and/or giving the cafe's contract to a local business owned by a person of color
 - b. The Columbia Law School's cafe serves as an important example of this.
2. Provide an institutional commitment in terms of catering and services
 - a. All SIPA events should cater from Black-owned and/or people of color-owned restaurants and businesses in Harlem
 - b. These businesses should be listed as student organization vendors
3. Encourage more capstones that focus on Harlem
 - a. Including a capstone that investigates the historical and ongoing harm done by SIPA and Columbia more broadly to the Harlem community
 - b. The capstones should have a component of social justice
4. Investigate and disclose any contractual and non-contractual relationships between SIPA and the NYPD

Comments:

In regards to the **SIPA cafe contracts for Harlem based, Black owned businesses (1)**, Dean Janow notes that this summer the administration will “explore opportunities for additional Harlem-based businesses to sell products at Publique.” However, no point has been made on an **institutional commitment to catering (2)** and **critical capstones on Harlem (3)**. In addition, we have not heard from the administration regarding the **relationships with the NYPD (4)**, which we also reference on pages 4-6.

We thank you for your time and look forward to hearing from you. **We would like to request our third meeting, which we hope to occur at the last week of July (July 27-31)**. This would give the administration ample time to read over our comments and address them. For your convenience, we have created an [action tracker](#), which we request that you use and fill out by **July 27**. We will fill out the parts that have already been addressed.

Sincerely,

Selena, Jessica, Shani, Jason, Ruby, Benson, and Drashti