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## RISD Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI) Action Plan

The [2017 RISD Social Equity and Inclusion \(SEI\) Action Plan](#) describes how RISD's 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. At that time, the institution committed to supporting each academic department and staff unit in developing an action plan addressing social equity and inclusion. With the appointment of Matthew Shenoda as the former Vice President of Social Equity and Inclusion in 2018 and the establishment of the [Center for SEI](#) in 2019, the architecture department began the collaborative work led by full-time faculty to develop and adopt an SEI position statement by the end of AY 2018-19.

Adopted in May 2019, the departmental plan set forth an ambitious and necessary set of values and goals in support of the continued creation of a positive and respectful creative environment, a critical and supportive culture of assessment and critique, and acknowledge the curricular and non-curricular lives of our diverse student population.

### Architecture SEI Plan

The Architecture Faculty, recognizing the importance and relevance of the Social Equity and Inclusion initiative to the future of art and design, in general, and the college, in particular, to further promote and implement the core principles of inclusion, equal opportunity and respect for all members of the community as described in the RISD SEI Action Plan.

#### Diversity

Central to the commitment to diversity is understanding the individual's multidimensional identity—their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic standing, gender, sexuality, belief systems, ability, age—and their intersectionality. As a department and in dialogue with each other, we will leverage the diverse skills and cultural knowledge our students bring to the table. We will re-examine our course content every semester to tap into these diverse knowledge streams, building upon the wealth of knowledge and experience our students already possess.

The Architecture Faculty will strive for more inclusive pedagogies, always cognizant of our examples, precedents, citations, resources, and sources, and the implicit and explicit inclusions and exclusions of our examples, precedents, citations, resources and sources. We will actively seek out extracanonical architects, buildings and practices while encouraging our students to do the same. When crafting syllabi, we will reflect upon whether the inclusivity of the document cites non-western precedents, project examples and architects. Additionally, we will question the methods and politics of extraction of the materials we engage. We will question their appropriateness to our work, the ethics of their sourcing, and the sustainability of their usage.



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## RISD Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI) Action Plan

Committed to being active listeners and for our student body to hear various perspectives on the built environment, we will explicitly seek diverse lecturers, candidates, and critics who will bring new experiences and expertise to the department. Understanding the value and pedagogical and cultural significance that a diverse student body can have on the education of an architect, we will continue to pursue inclusive admissions processes. In our evaluation of students, we will grade to support and sustain that diversity. We will work towards an evaluation structure that emphasizes multiple value systems and ways of learning to consider each student's identity and background.

We are committed to financially supporting and mentoring student-led initiatives, specifically organizations that are committed to reforming systems of privilege that create disenfranchisement.

### Inclusion

For the Architecture department to be a genuinely inclusive community, we are committed to a learning and working environment that respects both the individual and the individual's socio, cultural and economic differences. An inclusive environment means recognizing that staff is working with us to achieve our collective goals rather than for us as individuals. As a community, we will commit to working together to maintain a clean, productive and organized workspace and studios. As a community, we will share responsibilities for the stewardship of the facilities in a manner that respects all users, including faculty, staff, students and administration. We will continue the practice of community town halls each semester, giving students a vehicle for voicing their concerns and opinions. We will ensure that our communal resources—the shop, the computer lab, technologies in the studio—are equitably accessible.

### Equity

Not all students share the same educational background or experiences when entering RISD. The student body brings a range of experiences, viewpoints, and occasionally certain biases. We are aware of the pressures and expenses of higher education for our students. We will explore ways to keep educational costs in the department down, address the issue of invisible course costs, and develop means to support students in our community with financial needs. The department is committed to sustaining and expanding our student body's diversity through faculty engagement and advising.



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## RISD Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI) Action Plan

### Assessment and Moving Forward

This plan currently serves as a guiding light for long-range visioning, ensuring our discussions and department growth center the construction of an equitable, diverse, and inclusive learning environment. The table below identifies action items as curricular or non-curricular and governance, structure, and policy-related assessment areas to the Architecture SEI Plan. The table, attached as an appendix, identifies the current status of actions as **ACTIVE**, **IN PROGRESS**, or **TO BEGIN** as well as progress updates.

Our goal with this action plan is to continuously reflect on how a holistic view of our program addresses the material, physical, and emotional needs of a diverse and engaged student community and serves as a form of accountable action to our community. The action plan and identifying status serve as the beginnings of a structure of accountability to our students and welcome a continued conversation that centers on the privilege and power of their education as architects, designers, makers, and artists.

05/18/19

REV 03/01/23



# RISD Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI) Action Plan

Architecture SEI Plan Action Item	CURR.	NON-CURR.	GOVERNANCE, RESOURCES + POLICY	STATUS	ASSESSMENT and PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS
Revisit all staff job descriptions to align with the current SEI objectives.			X	ACTIVE	<p><i>As a direct response to the Strategic Plan, several updates were made to job search and hiring policies aimed at increasing diversity and retention of staff. Human Resources developed RISD guidelines for recruitment and talent acquisition aligned with RISD's commitment to supporting a diverse and inclusive learning community.</i></p> <p><i>The department will continue to support these best practices, under the direction of staff management, providing feedback and input.</i></p>
Create a student guide/contract covering the respectful use of facilities. Have students sign it.		X	X	IN PROGRESS	<p><i>In Fall 2023, faculty revised the RISD Architecture Studio Community and Culture Agreement. It is currently under review, but focused on the following headings: Working in the Studio, Time Management, The Work Environment, Collaborative Learning, Integration, Our Janitorial Staff, Equipment, Critique, Respect, and Responsibility.</i></p> <p><i>A system for recurring review is to be developed in AY23-24.</i></p>
Establish and support a structure for a student-organized event—lecture or workshop—as part of the department event series each year.		X	X	ACTIVE	<p><i>AY 22-23 - The department supported four lectures organized by AIAS as the Spring semester series:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Deborah Berke</i></li> <li>● <i>Jonathan Knowles and Laura Briggs</i></li> <li>● <i>Tom Sieniewicz</i></li> <li>● <i>Saul Kim</i></li> </ul> <p><i>AY 23-24 - The department will support separate lectures (one each) sponsored by the following student groups:</i></p>

## RISD Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI) Action Plan

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AIAS</li> <li>• NOMAS</li> </ul> <p><i>The focus of improvement will be coordination and communication with student groups, and providing them department funding to self-initiate events.</i></p>																				
Collect, critique, discuss, and publish syllabi and project briefs, student work, and retrospective analyses that represent the most innovative pedagogical approaches and experiments with respect to inclusive teaching and learning.	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>IN PROGRESS</b>	<p><i>Currently all course syllabi are collected prior to the beginning of each semester and made accessible to all faculty for review through a Google Drive site.</i></p> <p><i>The AY 23-24 efforts are focused upon the collecting and sorting of current and past data to establish resources for consistent course learning objectives and outcomes. Curricular assessment presentations will proceed per the proposed schedule:</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1423 737 1785 1008"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">PROPOSED SCHEDULE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>MArch - Core Studio</td> <td>AY 23-24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MArch - Drawing / Modeling</td> <td>AY 23-24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BArch - Core Studio</td> <td>AY 24-25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BArch - Drawing / Modeling</td> <td>AY 24-25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advanced Studios + Electives</td> <td>AY 25-26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thesis</td> <td>AY 25-26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>History / Theory / Criticism</td> <td>AY 25-26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Architectural Technology</td> <td>AY 26-27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Professional Practice &amp; Internships</td> <td>AY 26-27</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	PROPOSED SCHEDULE		MArch - Core Studio	AY 23-24	MArch - Drawing / Modeling	AY 23-24	BArch - Core Studio	AY 24-25	BArch - Drawing / Modeling	AY 24-25	Advanced Studios + Electives	AY 25-26	Thesis	AY 25-26	History / Theory / Criticism	AY 25-26	Architectural Technology	AY 26-27	Professional Practice & Internships	AY 26-27
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Host faculty from other departments/divisions whose work is particularly innovative to present and discuss their experiences and work with architecture faculty.		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>TO BEGIN</b>	<p><i>This initiative has not begun in the department.</i></p> <p><i>Project to begin Spring 2024.</i></p>																				
Budget for faculty development with respect to inclusive pedagogy and course content.	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>ACTIVE</b>	<p>Since 2020, three (3) full-time faculty from the Architecture Department have participated in the Decolonial Teaching in Action Seminar since its launch through a teaching course teaching release. Supported by the Teaching and Learning Lab in the Center for Social Equity and Inclusion, The <b>Decolonial Teaching in Action</b> program</p>																				

## RISD Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI) Action Plan

					<p>provides faculty-taught semester-long courses for faculty that focus on the theory and practice of decolonizing the curriculum and inclusive teaching.</p> <p>The department will continue to support at minimum one full faculty to apply to participate each year in the program.</p>
<p>Clarify and document the purpose, goals, and value of group-grading to acknowledge expanded kinds of evaluation and the expectation that the syllabus clearly defines evaluation procedures.</p>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>IN PROGRESS</b>	<p>An initiative to define group-grading — a long-established department practice — as a policy and in syllabi for students is a goal of AY23-24.</p> <p>Currently, there is not consistent group-grading statement shared across courses, but an unstated belief in its intrinsic value to the department culture. Efforts to establish a written statement began in summer 2023 with the first year MArch students — faculty authored a group-grading statement shared across all syllabi.</p> <p>This statement will be the basis for future discussions with the full-faculty and the eventual development of a policy in service of the action item goal.</p>
<p>Department head to review the syllabus of faculty and provide feedback on whether SEI curriculum goals are being achieved.</p>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>TO BEGIN</b>	<p><i>AY 23-24, the Department reviews syllabus for primary structure Project to begin in conjunction with curriculum assessment schedule.</i></p>
<p>Design and maintain critique space distinct from classroom space.</p>			<b>X</b>	<b>TO BEGIN</b>	<p><i>A study of building use and space requirements will begin in AY 24-25.</i></p>
<p>Ensure a diversity of lecturers in relation to gender, ethnicity, sexuality interdisciplinary, race are being invited to all lecture series and symposia moving forward.</p>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>ACTIVE</b>	<p>Since AY 17-18, the lecture series has included a diversity of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and race.</p> <p>The department will continue to support the Lectures and Exhibition Coordinator in these efforts annually.</p>

## RISD Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI) Action Plan

<p>Ensure fully funded travel is part of a core curriculum course</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>		<p><b>X</b></p>	<p><b>IN PROGRESS</b></p>	<p>Since Fall 2019 (with the exception the global pandemic), the third semester graduate core studio, Grad Core 03: Cites, has included fully-supported travel for all students. The following cities have been the subject of study for the core studio:</p> <p>Fall 2019 - Atlanta            Fall 2020 - Chicago (no travel)            Fall 2021 - New York            Fall 2022 - Stockholm            (forthcoming) Fall 2023 - Mexico City</p> <p>The Dean, Department Head, and Institutional Advancement are committed to supporting this structurally to ensure the programs longevity.</p> <p>The eventual goal is to have travel supported within the core undergraduate program.</p>
<p>Revisit student fees with respect to costs incurred and advocate for the equitable distribution of course funds to architecture students.</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>		<p><b>X</b></p>	<p><b>IN PROGRESS</b></p>	<p>The department has not completed a cost analysis since the implementation of the shared technology paid by students as part of their annual tuition.</p> <p>AY 23-24: A course cost analysis is being undertaken and led by the Department Head focused upon equitable distribution of funds and increasing access to equipment, tools, and learning experiences in support of students.</p>
<p>Establish a department-specific materials fund to support students with the goal of responding quickly to the needs of students.</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>		<p><b>X</b></p>	<p><b>TO BEGIN</b></p>	<p>The department has not completed a cost analysis since the implementation of the shared technology paid by students as part of their annual tuition.</p> <p>The establishment of this fund will be a part of a course cost analysis being undertaken by the Department Head in AY 23-24.</p>
<p>Articulate the distinction between academic advising and other kinds of student support. Establish resources in the department to</p>		<p><b>X</b></p>	<p><b>X</b></p>	<p><b>IN PROGRESS</b></p>	<p>The department relaunched the internal faculty resource digital site to house resources for advising and better define their role in support of student development.</p>

## RISD Social Equity and Inclusion (SEI) Action Plan

<p>address the latter and train faculty on the policies, resources, and limits with respect to their role.</p>					<p>In our assessment of advising structures, the former system was not working for students or faculty. Students were being assigned a new academic advisor every academic year. Faculty were only advising specific years of students and, although gaining experience and comprehension of one cohort, did not have a holistic understanding of our student experience across cohorts and programs.</p> <p>A new advising system was implemented for AY 23-24. In this new structure, students will remain with the same department advisor (with the exception of a sabbatical) for the duration of their studies. Faculty will also advise students across all cohorts and programs — graduate and undergraduate. This will produce some difficulties when establishing office hours, but we assess will produce a more cohesive experience over a students time in the department.</p>
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