

I. OVERVIEW

The first meeting of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's (SAIC) Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) North Lawndale Subcommittee was held on Friday, October 30, 2020 online from 3:00–4:30 p.m.

A. ATTENDING

Danielle Andress, assistant professor; Paul Coffey, vice president and dean of community engagement (co-chair); Delinda Collier, interim dean of graduate studies and co-chair of ARC; Dawn Gavin, dean of undergraduate studies; Leah Gipson, assistant professor (co-chair); Eric Hotchkiss, assistant professor, adjunct; Zemaye Okediji, graduate student; Kamau Patton, assistant professor; Carrie Ruckel, manager of student media and training; Tristan d'Estree Sterk, associate professor; Christine Tarkowski, professor; Jeff Ward, special assistant for executive communications (notetaker).

B. AGENDA

- Introductions
- Charging the committee
- Subcommittee's work and "Black Futures" letter
- Additional membership
- Discussion

C. ENCLOSURES

Written description and to-dos for subcommittee

II. CHARGING THE COMMITTEE

After introductions, Collier, as chair of ARC, formally charged the subcommittee. Rather than overly dictate the subcommittee's agenda, she framed the following three objectives that derive from the written description and "to-dos" (encl.), which were themselves informed by petitions and demands received by the School, such as the "Black Futures" letter:

1. Restate and clarify the anti-racist principles underlying all programming in North Lawndale
2. Revisit the allocation of resources (budget and staff)
3. Establish a set of learning goals and outcomes for the SAIC curriculum in North Lawndale that clearly relates to the institutional learning goals and outcomes

III. SUBCOMMITTEES WORK AND “BLACK FUTURES” LETTER

Gipson, as one of the contributors to the “Black Futures” letter, framed how the School had been implicated in participating in structural racism, thereby creating systemic harm, and how this subcommittee could help the clarify the School’s relationship to North Lawndale, which includes Homan Square and Nichols Tower, in terms of how it prioritizes curriculum and community outreach, supports and examines its presence and actions in the neighborhood, and holds itself accountable. In particular, she hoped that in moving towards an anti-racist approach subcommittee members would reframe the thought pattern “how does SAIC go into North Lawndale” and consider “how North Lawndale should change SAIC.”

IV. ADDITIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Subcommittee members then discussed what additional individuals and perspectives should be added to the committee’s membership. Two additional members of the SAIC community who already work in the neighborhood, Apriel Campbell, assistant director of civic engagement and resident of North Lawndale, and Taykhoom Biviji, project manager, will be invited to join the subcommittee. Members also endorsed the inclusion of non-SAIC residents of the North Lawndale community, and Coffey and Gipson would suggest individuals for the group to consider at a future meeting.

V. DISCUSSION

The membership conversation flowed into a larger conversation about the subcommittee and its work. Salient points and questions included:

- There is a general lack of awareness about the SAIC’s work in North Lawndale among the School community
- Committee members are encouraged to visit the neighborhood, including the School’s presence in Nichols Tower, and review the North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council’s (NLCCC) quality of life plan¹.
- SAIC’s programming in North Lawndale is made in collaboration with a community advisory board comprised of area residents.
- Beginning by thinking “how does SAIC become a place where people from North Lawndale want to come” is a useful way to escape thought patterns of structural violence (e.g., How can this other community labor to reveal its needs to us? What can we give the community? How do we incorporate that site into us?).

¹ North Lawndale: The Next Chapter, Quality of Life Plan can be found online at:
<https://nlcccplanning.org/home-3/north-lawndale-the-next-chapter-quality-of-life-plan/>

- SAIC has a long history of thinking and organizing in terms of disciplines, and working across them, but it is not clear what discipline is being engaged with in North Lawndale, a particular place with a unique history.
- Committee members agreed that many students and faculty members were not equipped to work in North Lawndale or deeply engage with community engaged or social practice work.
- Supporting work in North Lawndale is a fundraising priority for SAIC President Elissa Tenny. The first five years of programming was support by a \$500,000 gift; now in its sixth year of programming, work in North Lawndale is funded by operational funds and further supported by grants, including the National Endowment for the Arts “Our Town” grant.
- Hotchkiss, talking about how to address the need for job training and opportunities for entrepreneurship identified by North Lawndale community members, discussed his proposed curriculum and maker space where young adults could develop trade-like skills and an art practice. Ideally, this popup space would develop into a self-sustaining printshop/open studio for young creators in the neighborhood. The project has applied for “Our Town” grant support in partnership with NLCCC.
- Conceptualizing work in North Lawndale as an SAIC academic department or program may marshal vision (e.g., curricula, student outcomes, academic culture) and resources (e.g., tenure-track faculty positions, budget, enrollment), helping drive progress in this work within the School.
- A number of subcommittee members previously served on diversity action subgroup dedicated to connectivity. Having been folded into this subcommittee, their initial work on developing a five-year plan for work in North Lawndale and considering a Master of Arts in Community Engagement program will be further developed in this subcommittee.