

I. OVERVIEW

The second meeting of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's (SAIC) Anti-Racism Committee (ARC), Climate and Accountability Subcommittee, was held on Friday, November 20, 2020 online from 10:00–11:30 a.m.

A. ATTENDING

Dio Aldrige, special assistant to the dean and provost on diversity, equity, and inclusion (co-chair); Robyn Besana, disability specialist; Craig Downs, executive director of media and instructional resources; Dawn Gavin, dean of undergraduate studies (co-chair); Salvador Jiménez-Flores, assistant professor; Rebecca Keller, professor, adjunct; Jenny Lee, assistant professor; Mike Nicolai, chief human resources officer; Don Pollack, associate professor, adjunct; Molly Scranton, associate director of faculty affairs; Patrick Spence, associate dean of student affairs for campus life; Carly Trujillo, undergraduate student; Jeff Ward, special assistant for executive communications (notetaker).

B. VISITING

Jefferson Pinder, director of diversity, equity, and inclusion for academic affairs (ARC co-chair)

C. AGENDA

- Action Item Work
 - Ombudsperson
 - Black, Indigenous, people of color space

II. ACTION ITEM WORK

After brief re-introductions, subcommittee members broke into two groups to discuss the two action items they prioritized—an ombudsperson and a space on campus dedicated to those who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color. During a reporting out to the full subcommittee and discussion, members made the following salient points:

A. OMBUDSPERSON

- Desired areas of expertise for an ombudsperson included race, sustainability, and restorative justice practice
- Models from other institutions, especially schools, as well as guidelines from the International Ombudsman Association, have informed initial research
- The positions should be confidential, i.e., can help willing individuals mediate conflict without filing formal complaint through existing policy (e.g., Title IX).

More research needs to be done to clarify how an ombudsperson functions confidentially within mandatory reporting requirements.

- As their work continues, members would seek further consultation with human resources, the office of student affairs, and student input.
- Members will work towards a draft job description as a tool to further their work.

B. BLACK, INDIGENOUS, PEOPLE OF COLOR SPACE

- Seen as a resource for students, the group working toward a space dedicated to community members who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color seeks more input from students, especially student groups who would utilize the space. Hiring a focus group of students that is broadly representative of the student body may be a good way to get feedback and build trust in the process for the space as well as the ombudsperson.
- The space should be designed to be scalable, growing over time from a virtual to physical space.
- Members want to seek an outdoor space to compliment an indoor space.
- The space should be a place where art production and practice can take place within these affinity communities. Some room for exhibition would be ideal for the physical space.
- While the space was seen as a place that would be student-run, the space should accommodate opportunities for mentorship.
- Members discussed balancing needs for a space to address needs of specific communities—e.g., a Black-centered space, or a space for international students being identified as “of color” for the first time—while also making a space where different groups could come together. Thinking about adjacencies—both physical (multiple spaces) and temporal (dividing space by time)—may be necessary to meet multiple demands.
- The committee discussed how the name of the space and the language used to describe the space could help address the many ambitions for the space. Suggested language included: “safe space;” “open space;” “chez nouns;” French for “with us;” and “The House;” which could be translated into other languages by different groups, e.g., “La Casa.” The “Center on Halstead” was also cited as an example of a name and space that centers a particular, diverse community—LGBTQIA—without seeming to exclude.

- In particular, the term “BIPOC” was seen as limiting and less powerful than detailing Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Anti-Black and Indigenous equality is a particular focus, and being more specific about who is being addressed could better focus aims. As a term whose common has only recently emerged, members should seek further feedback from students and student groups about the use of the term.